

Framing of Corporate Social Responsibility by Agribusiness in the USA and Europe

A study of whether the Corporate Social Responsibility disclosure of the agribusiness firms in the USA and Europe align to the stakeholders' expectations, specifically to the NGOs and the external constituents.

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This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

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Faculty, School of Business and Law
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FOREWORD

This thesis examines whether the CSR disclosures provided by the agribusiness firms align to the stakeholders' expectations. The framing theory along with the document analysis and the purposive sampling method have been employed. The results demonstrate the importance of framing in CSR reporting. The thesis reveals that the CSR reports analyzed demonstrate a weak alignment with the stakeholders' expectations. According to requirements of the University of Agder I have attached a reflection note enclosed as an appendix where more information is included about my learning journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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I want to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Anna Alon and Stina Torjesen, which both provided me with fruitful ideas, suggestions, and guidance while conducting my thesis, and gave me a boost when I was in a dead-end situation. Special thanks should also be given to the staff of our department; School of Business and Law, and the University's library, who provided me with the necessary assistance when it was required.

KONSTANTINOS VOULGARIS

20-May-2016

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, who have supported me throughout my entire life, and gave me everything for my upbringing. Without them, this 2 years Master Thesis journey would not have been fulfilled.

Dedicated to my wife, who supported my decisions, accompanied me on this journey, and sustained me with encouraging words that took away from me the burden of this task. Together we will have a moment to remember for a life time from Norway.

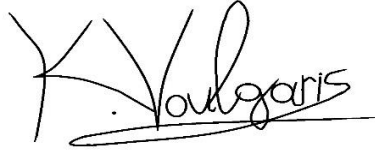
Also I would like to thank all the Norwegians for their hospitality and the wonderful stay we had in your country. You are pleasant and kind people, with a governance which still represent the Democratic political system as it is supposed to be. Secure it as the apple of your eye in these challenging times.

Finally, I would like to refer to the Legendary Greek king Odysseus, of Homer's epic cycle the Odyssey and Iliad. Whose 20 eventful years in the Trojan War, and his wanderings back home, motivated me, and taught me to never give up, and no matter what I do, the versatility, the persistence and the focus on the goal will win against all the odds. To all the future master students reading this text, you should wonder: What is a 6 months assignment, compared to 20 years away from home?

DECLARATION

Declaration by candidate:

I hereby declare that the present thesis titled: “**Framing of Corporate Social Responsibility by Agribusiness in the USA and Europe**” is my original piece of work, and it has never been submitted to any other Universities for any academic award, other than the University of Agder.

**KRISTIANSAND****20-May-2016**

Place

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines whether the CSR reports by agricultural biotechnology and agrochemical companies in the USA and Europe align to the stakeholders' (NGOs and the external constituents) expectations. The focus is on issues of key importance to these firms and the stakeholders, including GMOs, chemicals, and the corporate control over seeds.

Framing creates expectations, as framing theory indicates framing is to focus on some of the many facets through which an issue can be seen, and highlight them using salient words and phrases to render them significant.

The analysis revealed that 16 companies prepare CSR reports: 8 European and 8 US. In the European region: 4 CSR reports discussed about these issues, and 4 did not. In the USA region: 3 CSR reports discussed about these issues and 5 did not. These 7 CSR reports discussed about the facets of the issues that were of interest for the stakeholders, but from a different angle, creating different framing approaches amongst the actors, and misalignment to the stakeholders' expectations.

Framing explains different actors' approach towards issues of discourse. Comprehension of the framing is vital for companies, since CSR reporting is about communication, and framing is present to any kind of communication, deliberate or inadvertent. Framing of an issue might take place on a mutual accepted and common frame, or on diverse frames. In the second case each actor creates a unique frame towards an issue which produce a parallel monologue leading to conflict. My thesis recommendation for companies publishing CSR reports is to improve their disclosures by aligning framing approaches.

Keywords: CSR reporting, Framing, Agribusiness, GMOs, chemical.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFS: Center for Food Safety (NGO)

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

EC: European Commission

EC: External Constituents

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

EU: European Union

FDA: Food and Drug Administration

FIFRA: Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act

FOE: Friend Of the Earth (NGO)

FWW: Food and Water Watch (NGO)

GE: Genetic Engineer

GI: Genetic Improvement

GM: Genetically Modified or Modification

GMO: Genetically Modified Organism (-s)

MNC: Multinational Company (-ies)

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OCA: Organic Consumer Association (NGO)

SOS: Save Our Seeds (NGO)

US or USA: United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Does the environmental CSR disclosure of the agribusiness firms (agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals) in the USA and Europe, align to the stakeholders' expectations, specifically to the NGOs and the external constituents, related with the issues of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), chemicals and the corporate control over seeds?

1.2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Agribusiness firms are located at the crossroads of various environmental and societal conflicts. These firms are exposed to the public eye, and the stakeholders require more sustainable practices to be adopted (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012). Stakeholders are constantly increasing their influence, NGOs like Greenpeace, Food and Water Watch can now promote their policies due to their good relationships with the mass media and the social capital they have acquired (Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2008).

CSR initiatives and reporting is applicable to all industries, but for the food and agriculture industry CSR has a significant position, due to health and food security issues (Poetz, Haas, & Balzarova, 2012, p. 152). According to Jonker and Nijhof (2006), Lindgreen (2010), CSR is the integration of social and environmental concerns in the corporate agenda, in order to address these concerns for their stakeholders' benefit, making the companies accountable for their stakeholder groups, and not accountable only to their shareholders.

The agribusiness firms produce innovative biotechnology and chemical products. The genetically modified products, the fertilizers, along with the business practice to patent living organisms and monopolize the seed market, have raised a number of concerns. People worry about their adequacy for human, as well as animal consumption, and for the protection of the environment. Since these products have been reported to generate adverse effects (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012; Griesse, 2007). Consequently, the stakeholders' perception towards these firms have changed, and they are critical towards these business practices (Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008).

This situation has been observed to have a rising tendency as Dawkins and Lewis (2003) argue, and the companies do not pay attention to their responsibilities. It has also been argued that the agribusiness firms should alter the way they conduct their business practices in order to maintain their license to operate according to Friedrich, Heyder, and Theuvsen (2012, p. 531).

1.3. MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

The literature review indicates that the agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals companies have drawn the stakeholders attention, and specifically the NGOs and external constituents (Carvalho, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen's, 2012; Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012; Friedrich, Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2009; Carvalho, 2006). Since a significant number of researchers argue that these stakeholders (NGO and external constituents) mostly interact with these firms, compared with other stakeholders groups (Carvalho, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012; Friedrich, Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2009; Lusk, House, Valli, Jaeger, Moore, Morrow & Trail, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Borowiack, 2004; Maruz-Wierzbicka, 2015; Doh & Guay, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008b; Griesse, 2007; Weisenfeld 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008a).

These researches triggered my interest, and motivated me to research on these two industries. I wanted to investigate if the biotechnology and agrochemical firms disclose CSR reports, and if they had, I wanted to find whether these reports align to the stakeholders' expectations (NGOs and external constituents).

Therefore, the objective of this research is to shed light on the corporate social responsibility (CSR) and CSR reports of the agricultural biotechnology and agrochemical firms. I will examine what the stakeholders care about for the agribusiness? Respectively, what does the agribusiness firms publish in their CSR reports? The findings from this research will identify the gaps in the agribusiness CSR reports.

1.4. RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

Previous studies on CSR and sustainability reporting in the agribusiness industry have found that there is a conflict between the stakeholders and the agribusiness firms. The reason is the firms' controversial business practices. A number of studies also mention that companies on both sides of the Atlantic must consider the effects of different national backgrounds to the CSR agendas, since the companies ignore this factor (Dirk & Jeremy, 2008). Moreover, according to Constance (2010, p. 61) the world is divided along a European/US regulatory model regarding GMOs.

However, none of these studies had researched how this conflict could be reduced. In other words: Which is the application level of the corporate social responsibility of these companies in relation to the stakeholders' expectations? As Friedrich, Heyder, and Theuvsen, (2012) indicate:

“it could be useful to track the implementation of sustainability management concepts in the agribusiness sector” (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012, p. 25).

Consequently, current and past studies suggest that there is need for an examination of whether the corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the agribusiness firms (agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals) in the USA and in Europe, align to the stakeholders’ expectations (NGOs and the external constituents). These findings assisted on forming the main research question of my study which is:

Does the environmental CSR disclosure of the agribusiness firms (agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals) in the USA and Europe, align to the stakeholders’ expectations, specifically to the NGOs and the external constituents?

In order to answer this research question I will employ the document analysis approach, along with the framing theory.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THESIS

The results of this study will be important for the agribusiness firms since they will identify what the NGOs and the external constituents expect from these companies. Knowing this, the agribusiness companies will understand what initiatives should be added and performed into their CSR agendas.

Additionally, this study will be interesting for the agribusiness firms since it will shed light into their CSR reports, and identify the stakeholders’ expectations which have not been addressed into their reports. As well as, the firms which have not responded to the stakeholders. Finding these missing gaps on the reports, the companies will be able to conduct more transparent reports, to correspond holistically to the stakeholders concerns, and avoid being accused of greenwashing.

Thus, this research concerns the agribusiness firms (agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals), but it may be possible to be useful for other companies as well who publish CSR reports. This thesis will highlight areas that require more attention, in order to improve CSR reports.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This manuscript is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 - Relevance: presents information regarding the research background; an overview of the USA and European regions, in terms of cultivation activities, regulations in agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals. In addition, it presents a brief overview of the agribusiness industry.

Chapter 3 - Literature review and theoretical framework: presents a literature review on CSR, and CSR reporting in Europe and in the USA agribusiness sector. As well as, presents the framing theory in order to create the framework for analyzing the case.

Chapter 4 - Research methodology: this chapter discuss the research methodology used for this thesis; the qualitative document analysis, and the purposive sampling method. Also, I explain the reason why I chose this methodology for my thesis.

Chapter 5 - Document analysis and framing for the stakeholders: presents the document analysis for the stakeholders (NGO & external constituents) and the framing of the issues according to the framing theory by the stakeholders.

Chapter 6 - Document analysis and framing for the companies: presents the document analysis for the biotechnology and agrochemical companies and the framing of the issues according to the framing theory by the companies.

Chapter 7 - Findings and results: discussion of the findings and results. Presents the tables constituting the main findings and results of my research, discussion over the content of the tables pointing back to the theory, core articles, and methodology. A discussion of the importance of the results for the business community is also included.

Chapter 8 - Discussion: conceptualization of three possible cases that might give an explanation to the case.

Chapter 9 - Conclusions: presents the conclusion, and my recommendation. Also a discussion of the limitations, implications and future need for research is included.

2. RELEVANCE: INSIGHT INTO THE INDUSTRY AND TOPIC

According to Goldberg and Davis (Rust, 1957):

“Agribusiness is the sum total of all operations involved in the manufacture and distribution of farm supplies; production operations on the farm; and the storage, processing and distribution of farm commodities and items made from these. Thus, agribusiness essentially encompasses today the functions which the term agriculture denoted 150 years ago” (Rust, 1957, p. 1043).

Davis and Goldberg’s concept of agribusiness provided a holistic definition for the agribusiness industry, which includes: farming, farm-supply, products processing and distribution. They state that, science and technology changed the way agriculture functioned in the past, and removed from farmers the tasks of distribution and processing. This shift attributed to the off-farmer actors a perceptive of being an integral part of the agriculture sector. Therefore, in-farm and off-farm actors now need to be incorporated into the agribusiness sector as one (Trelogan, 1957).

The agricultural biotechnology, and agrochemicals are an internal part of the agribusiness industry as stated by Goldberg and Davis. The technological advancements acquired by these sectors, provide agrochemicals and biotechnology products to improve the yields in cultivation. However, these technologies raised a considerable number of concerns by the NGOs and the external constituents (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012). Health and food security issues emerge from these industries that impact the society, as Poetz, Haas & Balzarova (2012, p. 152) argues. For that reason CSR has a special position for these industries. Companies engaged in these two industries are continuously exposed to the public eye, and the NGOs, along with the external constituents, are increasingly demanding more sustainable business practices to be adopted (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012).

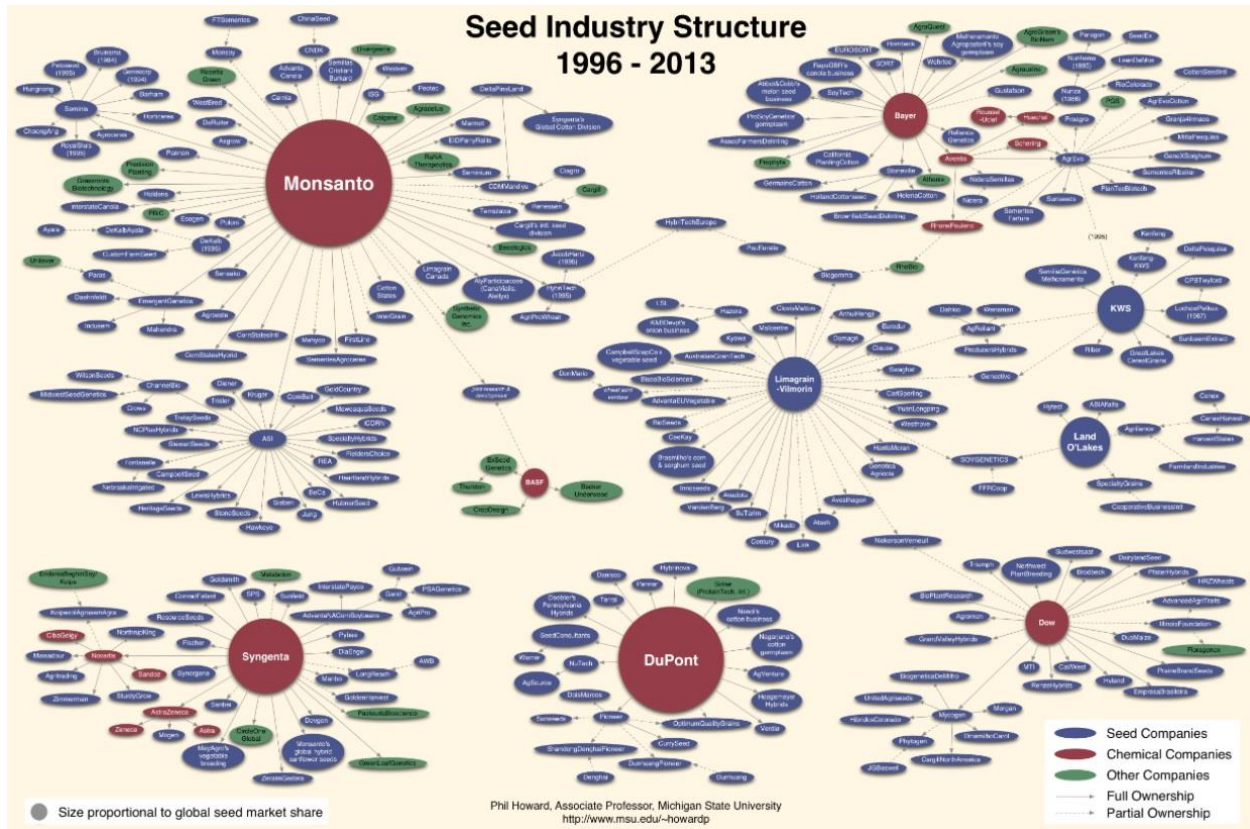
2.1. AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

For thousands of years farmers through the selection and breeding of the desirable traits of plants and crops have created the domesticated plants from wild varieties. Until recently, scientists interfere to the building blocks of these traits, also known as genes (DNA) which are responsible for these traits. Consequently, agriculture biotechnology (known as genetic engineering (GE), genetic modification GM, or genetic improvement GI) is the technology to produce crops with

transferred DNA. Scientists choose specific genes, not only from crops but also from other organisms, remove the undesirable genes and/or add new genes to the already existing DNA, in order to create a specific outcome such as: drought resistance, pest resistance, better yields, better taste, as well as many other benefits. Agriculture biotechnology appeared in 1990, and until 1995 farmers adopted and cultivated GE crops. In 2003, 7 million farmers across 18 countries in the world had planted GE crops. It is worthily mention that the 85 percent, or one third of these crops were grown in the developing countries (U.S.A.I.D., 2004).

Until 2008, the GM crops have been planted in a total area of 125 million hectares, which is the 8% of the 1.5 billion hectares of cultivated land in the globe. In the USA region 50% of the cropland is planted with GM crops, while in European region is 0.21%. The countries cultivating GM crops in Europe are: Germany, (cultivates more than 43 square kilometers), the Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Agricultural biotechnology introduced to the food industry new plants and products like the “Flavr Savr” tomato in 1995, Roundup-ready soybeans in 1996, and the so called ‘Bt maize’ in 1996. The 4 biggest GM companies are Bayer, Dupont, Syngenta and Monsanto, which commercialize more than 90% of all GM seeds in the world. Biotechnology is considered to be such a significant technology as it was the nuclear power in 1950s and the information technology. Agricultural biotechnology has been an integral part of the food industry, and the big agricultural biotechnology firms controlling this industry have completely transformed the agro-food economy in the world (Heijden, 2010).

The big biotechnology companies assert patent infringement on seeds. They have gained a significant share on the seed market and turned this market into a monopoly (Griesse, 2007). On the next page I have include an image by Howard (2013), to illustrate this monopoly, where we can see the biggest companies in the world, their subsidies and their size.

FIGURE 1: SEED INDUSTRY STRUCTURE 1996 - 2013

(Source: Howard, 2013. Michigan State University)

2.2. AGROCHEMICALS INDUSTRY

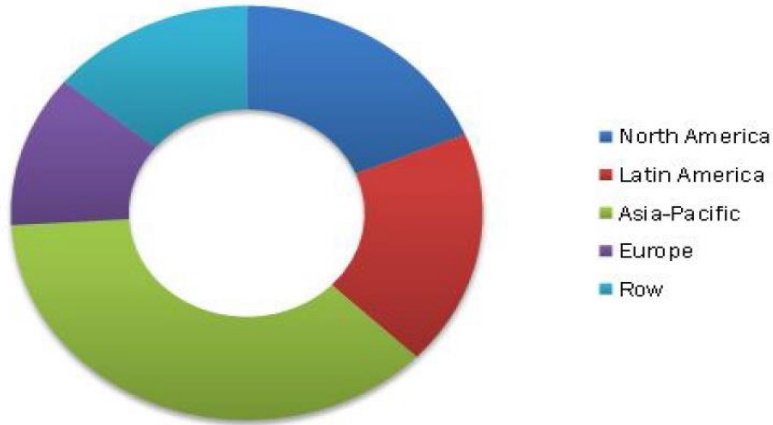
According to historical data, the first agricultural practice has been traced 10,000 years ago, and the need for protecting the crops from pests, weeds, and diseases was essential to prevent losses in yields that could result into famine. The first agrochemical was traced back to 4,500 years ago by Sumerians, it was sulphur compounds for pest control. Back then they did not have chemical compounds, and many inorganic chemicals were applied by farmers as pesticides. In 1940 inorganic substances as well as organic were applied for pest control. In the 1970s and 80s the greatest pesticides, herbicides and insecticides entered the market. In the 1990s firms improved the profiles of these products and new types of insecticides and fungicides chemicals entered the market, with better results on the field. Nowadays, through biotechnology many seed varieties have been evolved to produce their own pesticides to provide resistance (Unsworth, 2010). Agrochemical, or crop protection products are two common words referring to the same chemical products intended

for weed, pest, and diseases control that threatens the proper yields of crops. These products intent to facilitate farmers' efforts and provide enough food to feed the growing global population (CropLife Asia, 2015). This industry prepares various chemicals for protecting the crops, such as fertilizers, pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, fungicides) as well as powder, spray, and other types of chemicals (NewsRx, 2013; EU-OPENSREEN, 2014).

Agrochemicals during the past decades, due to the new technological achievements have been revolutionary changed. The agrochemical products have been a vital supplement for plenty of the farming and agriculture production. The global agrochemical market is being projected to reach 250.5 billion USD in 2020, and the trend is changing due to the entry of new firms through mergers and acquisitions. The popularity of GMO crops has been increased, and farmers use highly efficient chemicals in order to reduce the production cost. The major players in this market are Yara International ASA (Norway), The Mosaic Company (US), BASF SE (Germany), and Dow Chemical Limited (US) which account of 70% share of the total increase during 2010 to 2015. These agrochemical companies prefer to expand through joint ventures, partnerships, and collaborations for their geographical and product portfolio expansion (Markets and Markets, 2015). The image on the next page by Markets and Markets (2015) illustrates the market share of agrochemicals by regions in the world.

FIGURE 2: MARKET SHARE OF AGROCHEMICALS BY REGION

Agrochemicals Market Share, by Region, 2014 (USD Million)



(Source: Expert Interviews and Markets and Markets, 2015)

2.3. AGRICULTURE OVERVIEW AND REGULATIONS IN EUROPE

The agribusiness sector in European region utilizes 1.763.160 m² of land for agriculture purpose, out of 4.322.385 m² from the total land area (European Commission, 2013). 24 percent of the total population in Europe is occupied in the agribusiness industry (The World Bank, 2014). While the share of agriculture in the GDP rate is 1.2 percent (European Commission, 2013).

The European legislations on biotechnology and agrochemicals are framed to protect human and animal health, and foster the protection of the environment. Back in 1987 to 1991 the protection of the environment in Europe relied on voluntary actions undertaken by the agribusiness companies. These were voluntary approached under the article 19 in the form of limited targeted schemes. Followed by the MacSharry reforms in 1992 under the council regulation 2078/92/EEC that promoted the agro-environmental measures (AEMs). At present the current regulation on rural development are compulsory and not voluntary under the regulation 1698/2005/EC according to the European Commission (Burton, Schwarz, 2012).

According to the European Commission's regulation 1107/2009, there are strict rules for the approval of agrochemical products. They require fact-based approaches, and according to the EU regulation 283/2013 and 284/2013, certain dossiers for active ingredients must comply to the obligatory limitations in order to get authorization. These regulations have been established in

order to protect human and animals' health, as well as the protection of the environment from the agrochemicals products (European Commission-Pesticides and bees, 2016).

The European legislative framework regarding the agricultural biotechnology products contains the following regulations: Directive 2001/18/EC, Regulation (EC) 1829/2003, Directive (EU) 2015/412, Regulation (EC) 1830/2003, and Directive 2009/41/EC. These laws are the core rules containing even more specific aspects regarding GMOs. They require safety assessment before commercialization of the GMOs in order to be proven safe, as well as risk assessment for their efficiency and transparency. They also impose labeling requirements for the genetically modified (GM) products, in order to provide the necessary information to consumers, farmers, professionals, and individuals, so as to be easily traced once placed in the market (European Commission-GMO legislation, 2016).

In 2004 the European Commission required GMOs to be labeled if they included 0.9 percent of genetically modified ingredients. This regulation created a dispute between the US and Europe, because the US government stated that this was a very limited amount, and it would badly impact the US farmers, and emerging markets from adopting these products. The 2004 European Commission's decision on labeling GMOs was influenced mainly by the NGOs policies and activism, since the NGOs in Europe are more active compared to the US NGOs (Lusk, House, Valli, Jaeger, Moore, Morrow, & Traill, 2005; Mitchell, 2003).

2.4. AGRICULTURE OVERVIEW AND REGULATIONS IN THE US

The agribusiness sector in the USA region utilizes 4.052.307,06 m² of land for agriculture purpose, out of the 9.147.420 m² from the total land area (The World Bank, 2013). 19 percent of the total population in the US is occupied in the agribusiness industry (The World Bank, 2014). While the share of agriculture in the GDP rate is 1 percent (USDA, 2013).

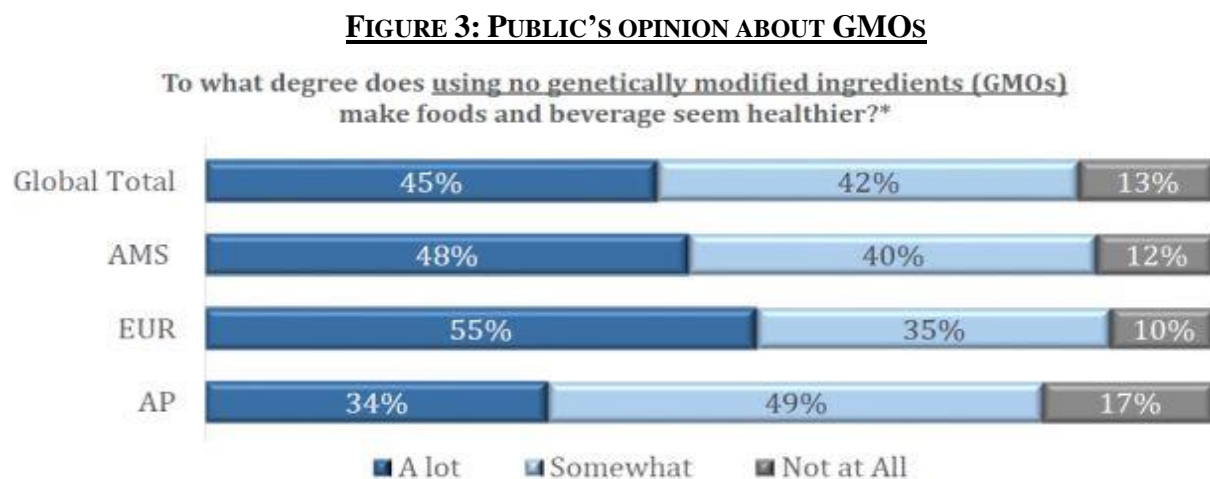
The focus of the US legislative framework on biotechnology and agrochemicals is not as strict as the European. The US regulatory body and FDA, indicate that if the GM products are not materially different from their counterparts, there is no reason to be labeled or change their name. They point out that name changes should only be applied when the GMO product will be so different from the traditional one, that the name will not be able to adequately describe the product,

or there will be safety issues such as allergens. In the US there is no active law to require labeling of GMO products, and only a few states require GMO labeling.

Regarding the agrochemicals, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for regulating, commercializing and allowing the use of agrochemicals under the Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). FIFRA indicates that the agrochemicals must be proven to be safe for the environment, and for food consumption, without being the source of any kind of side-effects. The agrochemicals must be tested according to a series of safety-related trials and proven to be safe before commercialization. Then they are registered into EPA for authorization (Library of Congress, 2015).

2.5. STAKEHOLDERS' CONCERNS FOR AGRIBUSINESS

The agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals firms are located at the crossroad of many environmental and societal conflicts. The modern farming processes of these companies have attracted the world's attention. The cultivation of GMOs, and the application of chemicals has emerged several environmental, and health concerns (Carvalho, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012; Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012). The image below by Watson (2015) is an example to illustrate the public's opinion regarding health concerns on GMOs.



(Source: Watson, 2015, Health Focus International. AMS: Americas, EUR: Europe, AP: AsiaPacific)

The world is divided in supporters and opposers of labeling on GMOs, and this can see on the image below by Bernick (2013), the supporters of labeling constitute the majority, and those who oppose are located in North America.

MAP 1: GMOs LABELING AROUND THE WORLD



(Source: Bernick, 2013)

2.6. THE TOPIC UNDER RESEARCH IN MY THESIS

The agribusiness firms are located at the crossroad of many environmental and societal conflicts. These conflicts stem from the NGOs, and the external constituents expectations regarding the business practices of these firms (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012).

Consequently, this thesis aims to examine whether the CSR reports of agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals companies, align to the NGOs and the external constituents expectations, since many researchers argue that these are the stakeholders which mostly interact with these firms compared with other stakeholders groups (Doh & Guay, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012; Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008a; Lusk, House, Valli, Jaeger,

Moore, Morrow & Traill, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Borowiack, 2004; Maruz-Wierzbicka, 2015; Carvalho, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2009; Griesse, 2007).

The arising issues of corporate control over seeds by these companies, the concerns by the stakeholders over the GMO products and agrochemicals, are fundamentally incompatible with CSR's values for the companies. Which are to focus not only on increasing the financial performance for their shareholders, but indicates to take into account a broad range of societal and stakeholder issues, in order to maximize the positive outcomes, and reduce the negative impacts for their stakeholders (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012; Jonker & Nijhof, 2006).

The document analysis approach along with the framing theory will be employed for answering the research question on this thesis. According to the framing theory, an issue can be seen from many different perspectives, and it can be framed as positive or negative. Framing indicates that an actor focuses on some of the facets of the issue, and uses salient words and phrases to describe these facets. So as to render them significant for the audience. Consequently, framing can create different versions of the reality (Entman, 1992, 2003). Therefore, it is essential to find how the stakeholders (NGOs and the external constituents) have framed these 3 issues, and then analyze the CSR reports to identify if the firms discuss about these 3 issues by aligning their arguments on a mutually accepted and common frame, or by differently framing the issues.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following chapter presents the literature review, and the current knowledge on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and CSR reporting in the agribusiness sector in the European and USA region. The constituents impacted by the agribusiness sector are presented, along with their concerns.

3.1. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be defined as the mutual and sustainable relationship between the companies, the government, and the stakeholders within a country. CSR indicates to put the individual's interest above the collective interest, which is in a sense a social contract between all the stakeholders within a society. CSR is about doing the right thing because it leads on doing better, and not doing the right thing because our moral institutions demonstrate to do so. CSR requires responsible attitude in the short and long term, towards the present and future members of a society. CSR is a voluntary business practice (Crowther & Aras, 2008; Lindgreen & Swaen, 2009). CSR's key aspects to be the cornerstone of business management practices are: economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Thus, businesses should not focus only on increasing their financial performance for their shareholders, but they should take into account a broad range of societal and stakeholder issues, in order to maximize the positive outcomes and reduce the negative impacts for the stakeholders. This practice is above and beyond of the legal requirements (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012; Jonker & Nijhof, 2006). CSR is an important tool that define company's role towards their stakeholders and function as a guide in order to apply ethical practices and standards to the firm (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2009, p. 1).

3.2. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports are voluntary disclosure reports prepared by firms practicing CSR. CSR reporting focus on the disclosure of nonfinancial implications of the business practices, for their external and internal stakeholders and shareholders. These reports are separate from the traditional annual-financial reports. CSR reporting emphasizes on a broad scope, and includes ethical, environmental, legal, philanthropic as well as social responsibilities. They also disclose employee and community matters (Kolk, 2008; Ellerup Nielsen & Thomsen, 2007).

3.3. MOTIVATIONS BEHIND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Companies incorporate CSR into their business agendas not only to respond to their stakeholders' expectations, but because there is a desire to grasp the competitive advantage and the benefits arising from CSR (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Ambec & Lanoie, 2008). Competitive advantage is the firm's capabilities to outperform their rivals by possessing specific traits, which the opponents do not possess (Porter, 1985). CSR can be perceived from different perspectives. The utilitarian perspective indicates that CSR is a tool to accomplish business objectives in terms of financial performance, sales volume, and return on investment. The positive duty says that CSR could be a self-propelled initiative to incorporate CSR into their agendas. Doing so, then the CSR principles become a corporate identity. While the negative duty presumes that CSR is for legitimizing business activities in the public eye and their stakeholders. The utilitarian and the negative duty approach suggest that CSR could be used to manipulate stakeholders' perception (Maignan & Ralston, 2002, p. 498). CSR improves the firm's brand name and image. CSR on the long run can improve the relationship between the company and the stakeholders, and results in committed employees, loyal customers and better citizen behavior. (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010, p. 17)

The rapid development of information technology, the internet and social media, gave the power to the interested stakeholders to put pressure to the agribusiness firms who are not complying with their expectations. These stakeholders can badly influence firm's reputation and promote their interests very quickly. For firms whose survival is tightly connected with their corporate reputation, product responsibility and food safety, the outcome will be disastrous. For these companies, the fulfillment and response to their stakeholders' expectations is essential. A good brand equity and reputation can be achieved by CSR. Another positive outcome has being reported to be the improved financial performance, when applying properly the CSR agenda (Ross, Pandey, & Ross, 2015).

It has also being argued that CSR increases the firm's market value, as an outcome of customer satisfaction. Moreover, innovation is being reported to be an outcome of CSR. CSR initiatives usually change the firm's production and process practices to be more sustainable. This alternation usually results into innovative techniques and improved product quality which also improves the corporate financial returns for the firm. In contrast, companies with low innovative capabilities

end up with customer dissatisfaction, which is harmful for the firm's market value (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006)

3.4. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN AGRIBUSINESS

CSR has a special place in the agribusiness sector, because health and food security issues emerge, having direct impact to the society (Poetz, Haas & Balzarova, 2012, p. 152). Hayder and Theuvsen (2008b) argue that CSR may have a positive relationship in the agribusiness sector. CSR may affect the corporate strategy, legitimacy, financial performance and firm's reputation. According to their research, CSR may enhance and improve the abovementioned traits in the agribusiness. Hayder and Theuvsen (2008a) state on their research that firms incorporating CSR initiatives into their corporate agendas tend to be more successful in terms of financial performance, compared to the firms who do not.

Not only positive, but also negative traits have been attributed to a good corporate financial performance on CSR. Firms might be badly criticized because stakeholders might perceive this good financial performance as an outflow of the company's actions to extract more from the society, while the outflows to the people are proportionally less (Barnett, 2007).

Two in five among the top management (in the industry) agree that not enough attention has been paid to their CSR commitments, and this tendency is increasing (Dawkins & Levis, 2003, p. 188). The only group that considers the information on the CSR reports to be of a decent quality are the companies to disclose these reports. The general opinion among institutional investors, financial analysts, and journalists, state that the quality of the information provided on these reports is poor (Dawkins & Levis, 2003, p. 191). It has been argued that the agribusiness firms must perform better and apply changes on how they perform their business practices. By completing these changes they will maintain their license to operate and deliver goods and products to the society (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012, p. 531). Another research also reveals that the agribusiness companies do not respond to the external pressures they might experience regarding the GMOs by their stakeholders. Meaning that they do not make any alternations to their CSR agendas (Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012).

Doh and Guay (2006) state that during the previous years CSR has increasingly become a popular practice in both sides of the Atlantic. The different contexts create different expectations that need to be addressed. The NGOs and the external constituents in Europe and in the US shape different

perception regarding CSR. This is happening because of the different prevailing political and institutional structures in Europe and in the US (Doh & Guay, 2006).

3.4.1. EUROPE

European community is more aware about the sustainability practices, compared to the US. European firms have a long presumption that firms are societally obliged to act on a responsible manner towards society and environment. Consequently, CSR found a fertile ground in a number of issues such as the GMOs, and the global warming on this region (Doh & Guay, 2006). The European companies disclose their CSR activities in a uniform way, this trait has been created because sustainability had been initially shaped as internal communication tool for the companies. Businesses wanted to support their relationship with the trade unions, so as to promote and secure the workforce interest, an element very important for the European region. Consequently, social and environmental reporting activities have been evolved from an internal communication process to a uniform process (Perrini, 2005).

Agriculture is important for the European economy, for that reason it is crucial to promote CSR incentives for sustainable changes in the agriculture policy. Changes which will be in compliance to the Europe 2020 strategy and future common agricultural policy (CAP). European citizens' perception about agriculture is to be as much sustainable as possible. The improvement of sustainable agriculture practices has emerged to be a major component for the European agribusiness sector. Eurobarometer in 2010 illustrated the European consumers' preferences on agribusiness. 59 per cent of the public expects that the agricultural products will be of a good quality and healthy for consumption, and 41 percent wants to be sustainable for the environment. The conclusion of this analysis is that the European consumers care about their health and pay attention on food security of these products. European agribusiness must focus more on producing safe and quality products, while preserving the natural resources (Maruz-Wierzbicka, 2015).

Additionally, the environmental movements in Europe have political influence and promote regulations both at a national level, but also across the European region. Thus, firms in Europe are mostly focused on the protection of the environment and on reducing their environmental footprint of their activities (Maignan & Ralston, 2002).

3.4.2. USA

Firms in the USA and in Europe have different motives on being socially responsible. They tend to use different motivation principles to explain their engagement into the CSR practices.

Moreover, the US firms use CSR to express the firm's culture, while European companies presume CSR as an activity enhancing tool. Across these two regions companies distinguish differently the importance of being perceived as a socially responsible firm, and they tend to emphasize into different CSR initiatives, since they differently perceive the issues (Maignan & Ralston, 2002). It has been reported that companies across the two regions, US and Europe, choose different self-presentation techniques and language to communicate about their CSR initiatives towards society. Another interesting finding is that CSR has been practiced in the US as well as in Europe more intensively than in other regions in the world (Dirk & Jeremy, 2008).

Agribusiness firms in the US in order to meet their commitments to CSR have established collaborations with other companies, NGOs and regional governments. The companies' focus on resource and cost reduction, donations, and use CSR in order to capture innovative techniques on doing business (Ross, Pandey, & Ross, 2015). In the US, firms adopt broad CSR perspectives into their agendas, these initiatives are usually aligned with the stakeholders' expectations. Firms adjust the CSR engagements with the required of their stakeholders. (Rankin, Gray, Boehlje, & Alexander, 2011).

3.5. CONSTITUENTS IMPACTED BY EUROPEAN AND US AGRIBUSINESS

The agribusiness companies during the last two decades has introduced top-class technologies to improve yields in agriculture. These technologies include the agricultural biotechnology, and the agrichemical products. These technologies however have raised a considerable number of concerns from the external constituents and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012).

There is an increasing conflict between the stakeholders and the agribusiness firms, and still this dispute has not been successfully addressed by the agricultural economists. The agribusiness firms are located at the crossroad of many environmental and societal conflicts. These conflicts stem from the NGOs, and the external constituents expectations regarding the modern farming processes of these firms. Companies engaged in these two industries are continuously exposed to their external constituents and the NGOs along with the public are increasingly demanding more sustainable business practices to be adopted (Friedrich, Heyder, &Theuvsen, 2012).

The large individual scandals of several firms in these sectors draw public's attention, those instances usually become generalized, effecting the whole sector. Additionally, the constituents

and NGOs are concerned about environmental and health risks of these business activities. Consequently, constituents' perception regarding the agribusiness firms is critical, and along with the NGOs', their negative perception is increasing from time to time. NGOs have been developed to a proficient level by means of interpersonal relationships with the mass media. So they can promote their agendas massively and gain more social capital and supporters from the external constituents. NGOs such as; Greenpeace and the Food and Water Watch (FWW), are a few examples of those instances, objecting to these firms (Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2008a).

The external constituents have grown their risk-consciousness and their attitude has changed towards these firms in the agribusiness sector. This can be illustrated in a study conducted in Germany in 2007. The study analyzed the image of the agribusiness, and indicated that the majority of the respondent stakeholders (72 per cent) perceive the agribusiness firms as not operating environmentally consciously. The results also demonstrate that the stakeholders were mostly interested on organic farming, and for the proper quality of products (Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008a).

The NGO activism has found different settings across the US and European region. Different political, and institutional contexts across the US and Europe shape different basis for the NGOs activism. Europe is more supportive towards the CSR initiatives, and NGOs have found a fertile ground in this context, compared to the US context. NGOs have greater influence policy in Europe because Europe is more sensitive regarding the GMOs, and environmental issues, compared to the US. (Doh, Guay, 2006)

3.6. WHAT THE CONSTITUENTS CARE ABOUT IN THE AGRIBUSINESS

There are three issues the constituents care about the agribusiness sector, which will be discussed on the below sections.

3.6.1. GMOs

The agricultural biotechnology is an upstream and downstream industry of the agribusiness sector. This sector is disapproved for its controversial practices, such as the biotechnology, and cloning which contributes to the massive production and consumption of GMO ingredients (Friedrich, Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012). The external constituents have expressed their concerns about GMOs regarding the impact these traits might have on the genetic variability of the wild flora (Carvalho, 2006). They also worried about health effects and safety for human consumption, but also safety

concerns for animal consumption. They are also concerned about possible side-effects on the environment. Heyder and Theuvsen's (2012) study shown that the agribusiness companies engaged in biotechnology in Germany are facing external pressure by their stakeholders. This effect is even more intense in the multinational agribusiness companies, since different cultural backgrounds imposes different legislative requirements and policies regarding the GMOs (Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012). The globe is divided into the European and the USA party, and the stakeholders from these two regions express their opposition against the use, production and promotion of the GMOs especially in Europe (Constance, 2010, p. 61).

The biotechnology in agribusiness is a big issue, and still has not been solved, the US government states that the fear of the public on GMOs is created because the public is miss-leaded and have inadequate knowledge on the subject. NGOs in Europe require an extensive laboratory examination on the products, in order to be considered safe for human consumption. Compared to the NGOs in the US, where they have failed to impose labeling, and the regulation is not that strict. Though, consumers are still pushing for a regulation body that will force the agribusiness companies to label GM ingredients. (Doh & Guay, 2006; Lusk, House, Valli, Jaeger, Moore, Morrow, & Traill, 2005; Mitchell, 2003).

Findings from a research conducted in 2002 revealed that not only the European publics' negative perception about GMOs prevent the biotechnology to flourish on this region, but also the negative perception of the external constituents towards their regulatory authorities. Therefore, they reveal a positive alignment between the publics' trust towards their governments and the acceptance for biotechnology (Irani, Sinclair, & O'Malley, 2002).

3.6.2. CHEMICALS

The agrochemical industry is also considered an upstream and downstream industry of the agribusiness sector. Agrochemicals constitute the crop protection and fertilizer products companies produce. The stakeholders are extremely worried about contamination of the natural environment from these products (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012). An empirical research conducted in 2009 by Heyder and Theuvsen revealed that the agribusiness firms are experiencing strong pressure by the external constituents, regarding their environmental externalities of their activities. (Heyder & Theuvsen, 2009). Numerous media reports have revealed the various stakeholders concerns about the pesticides, the environment, safety of bees and pollinators. Stating

that a large and growing number from the public are becoming aware of the controversial agriculture practices. Neonicotinoid pesticides are applied into the field to control and kill the harmful insects. However, these chemicals are also harmful for the bees and pollinators. The stakeholders argue that the reduction of the pollinators' population will result into adverse effect for the environment in the future. Blacquièrè, Smagghe, Gestel and Mommaerts (2012) reported that it is possible in the future to be an accumulation of neonicotinoid chemicals in the environment. (Blacquièrè, Smagghe, Gestel & Mommaerts, 2012, p. 988)

Developed regions such as Europe and the US, are moving towards the reduction of the massive use of pesticides (compared to the developing countries). This tendency is created due to the health concerns and the pressure imposed by the public. They argue that the use of pesticides leaves residues to the environment, which are destructive for the flora and fauna of our planet. Scientific results also prove that the agrichemicals - even in low concentrations – are harmful for the immune system and they have been connected with breast cancer and reduced male fertility. (Carvalho, 2006)

3.6.3. CORPORATE CONTROL OVER THE SEEDS

The public also criticize the rising power of those firms. They are concerned about the influence these companies have on the farmers, food supply, and agriculture. Only a few multinational companies (MNCs) have managed to monopolize the ownership, and the market of agricultural seeds. Since, these MNCs through mergers, and acquisitions have displaced their competitors. This trend still continues, and the outcome will be to control the whole aspect of the seeds. Which is, the genetic information, the production, the distribution of the seeds, and the crop protection products. This tendency will result to a complete control not only to the goods and the market, but also over the farmers and the agricultural production as a whole (Griesse, 2007).

Until now, the agricultural biotechnology through the development of the genetic information of the seeds, creates commodities from commons. These companies in the US have created a powerful intellectual property regime, and promote their own interests. In contrast with the farmers and family-owned businesses engaged in agriculture production, which are becoming more and more dependent on those MNCs (Weisenfeld, 2012).

In 1989 NGOs in order to protect the farmers against the growing commercial power of those firms, introduced the 'farmers rights'. This took place in the International Undertaking of the FAO

conference. The NGOs who had legal status at the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, proposed this action as a counterpoint against the MNCs growing power. This right arises its power from the long past, and contribution of the farmers over the centuries. Farmers have improved, conserved, and made available crops, genetic resources of plants, and seeds for the external constituents. By this right, the present and future generation farmers will be protect by the growing power of the agribusiness firms (Borowiack, 2004).

3.7. RESEARCH QUESTION STATEMENT

Previous researches on CSR and sustainability reporting in the agribusiness industry (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2009; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008a; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008b; Griesse, 2007; Weisenfeld, 2012; Carvalho, 2006; Borowiack, 2004) argue that there is an increasing conflict, between the stakeholders (NGOs and the external constituents) and the agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals firms. This conflict has emerged due to these firms controversial business practices. More specifically, stakeholders; the NGOs and the external constituents, are concerned about the controversial business practices and side-effects of the GMOs, the chemicals, as well as the firms inclination to monopolize and control the seed market, a trend that hits hard the small farmers.

A number of studies also mention that CSR has been differently perceived on both sides of the Atlantic. Different political, institutional, and national contexts create different CSR inceptions. (Dirk & Jeremy, 2008; Doh & Guay, 2006). A study conducted by Maignan and Ralston (2002) in Europe and in the US showed that the perception of the companies about corporate responsibility changes across nations. (Maignan & Ralston, 2002).

The globe is divided into two parties concerning the biotechnology, the European and the US regulatory models. These models express two completely different oppositions regarding the GMOs regulations (Constance, 2010; Doh & Guay, 2006; Lusk, House, Valli, Jaeger, Moore, Morrow, & Traill, 2005; Mitchell, 2005). Moreover, the USA and European regions have some similarities in cultural, linguistic and mass media terms, which constitute an ideal frame for comparison regarding the GMOs (Lundy & Irani, 2004). Although, it is important to research on a separate basis the USA and the European regions, since each region has different national and cultural backgrounds (Dirk & Jeremy, 2008). These impose different political, institutional structures and legislative requirements, which form different contexts within these two regions

(Doh & Guay, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012). Consequently, the companies perceive differently the importance of being socially responsible into diverse regions in the world (Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Dirk, Jeremy, 2008). Moreover the public across different regions, shapes different expectations regarding CSR (Doh & Guay, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012).

Consequently, current and past studies suggest that there is need to examine whether the corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the agribusiness firms (agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals) in the USA and in Europe, align to the stakeholders' concerns (NGOs and the external constituents).

The main research question of my thesis is:

Does the environmental CSR disclosure of the agribusiness firms (agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals) in the USA and in Europe, align to the stakeholders' expectations, specifically to the NGOs and the external constituents, related with the issues of GMOs, chemicals and corporate control over seeds?

In order to answer this question it is necessary to compare and contrast what the firms do related to the stakeholders expectations, and what the stakeholders want from the companies. The framing theory will be employed for this task, in order to identify how the NGOs and the external constituents frame these issues, as well as how the companies frame these issues according to their disclosures in their CSR reports.

3.8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FRAMING THEORY

On this chapter I present the framing theory, and discuss about the assumptions and propositions of this theory, to be relevant for my research question. I will highlight the inevitable implication of the framing in social movements, the effect in conflicts, as well as the importance of frames in present and future decision making and judgment, since frames generates expectations.

3.8.1. FRAMING THEORY

Framing theory is a combination of broad literature studies such as cognitive linguistic studies, constructionist studies, economics, psychology and communication. Also includes a range of political science and media studies. This large body of literature in the framing studies has recently emerged (Borah, 2011). Framing theory entails that framing is the procedure through which stakeholders perceive a specific issue and develop a concept for this issue. Through framing,

people create frames and conceptualize how they think about a problem, or by re-framing they can re-orient their perception. Thus, framing means that a problem might be viewed from multiple perspectives (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Frames:

Individuals tend to compress the world into simple and less complex inceptions, otherwise called as frames, or schemas. Frames guide peoples' perception and behavior. When a specific frame is being activated, certain expectations, and beliefs are being created (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Frames in humans' perception towards a specific issue play a very important role. Humans' cognitive consists of frames or schemas which are unconscious structures stored in the brain. Once we hear a specific word or a phrase, automatically we make connections with the frames. Our unconscious is activated, and emotions are created according to our perception of each of the frames. Thus, frames are building blocks of communication, thinking, and emotion generation. Without emotions, humans cannot undertake actions and decisions, since they will perceive these issues as meaningless (Lakoff, 2010). A frame outlines a situation in order to drive conclusions and take actions. Hence, it can be used to guide actions and organize experience in a collective or individual level (Joachim, 2003).

Frames have four distinct functions: i) give definition to a problem, and identifies the causal agents; what they are doing, what is their contribution to the problem and what benefits each agent provide ii) identifies what is the cause of creating this problem iii) evaluates each of the causal agents, their contributions, and the outcomes of their actions iv) can provide solution to the problem, make prediction of the outcome, and forecast the effects of the solution. For an example, during the cold war period the 'cold war' was a prevailing frame, which highlighted certain events such as the civil war, then it identified the source of these events which were attributed to the communist rebels, projected moral judgment (the atheist) and proposed solutions (the support by the US) (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Frames are divided into two categories. The frames in communication and the frames in thought. Frames in communication exist when the stakeholders establish a dialogue. In this type of frame the speaker uses certain words, images, and phrases when referring to an issue or event, to the audience. The chosen frames during the dialogue, disclose what the speaker presumes as significant to the issue, and reveal the speaker's emphasis. Frames in communication have a direct

impact on frames in thought, since they can manipulate or change an individual's perception towards an issue. Frames in thought in the other hand reveal what is the individual's perception, thinking, and understanding of a certain issue. They disclose what a single member from the audience perceives to be the relevant aspect of the issue during a conversation (Druckman, 2001; Chong & Druckman, 2007b).

Moreover, across nations frames are not understood the same. Although frames have the same function, which is to guide peoples' perception about a problem, and highlight some aspects of the reality, by rejecting some others. However, since the external constituents lack of detailed information and extensive understanding of certain issues, framing has a significant influence over these people, on how they will communicate about problems (Entman, 1993). Frames could also be constructed without facts, meaning that they do not have real evidence, but they are based on fictional perceptions. These frames can manipulate stakeholders' awareness and make them concentrate on the subjects that are being emphasized in the frame, although they are lacking of evidence to support what they are stand for (Druckman & Bolsen, 2011; Chong & Druckman, 2007b).

Thus, during a conversation frames are functioning according to the following sequence. The speaker or transmitter use frames (intentionally or unintentionally) manifested by the presence or the absence of words, phrases etc. to guide the conversation. The text or the speech, which contains the frames, using certain key words and phrases. The receiver, which is the audience and recipient of the text from the transmitter, at this point the frames shape the receivers perception and thought. And finally the culture, which consist also by common frames, which shape the social groups thinking (Entman, 1993).

Framing:

To understand the framing of an issue is very important, since it will provide a clear view of the issue, otherwise it will not be easy to identify the truth (Lakoff, 2010).

Framing is exercised by the transmitted (ex: speaker) to the receiver (ex: the public), and the opposite, for an example during a conversation. Framing is always related to an issue, by framing the transmitter focus on some of the many facets of an issue and attempts to make them seem important and significant for the receiver, while setting aside some other facets. With the intention

of presenting his/her perspective about this issue. The basic principle through which framing is exercised and manage to attract the receiver's attention to the selected facets of the issue, is by using salient words and phrases to describe them. These words are used to describe the facets of the issue in a way to attract the receivers' attention towards one of the many perspectives through which the issue can be perceived. Salient words are the words which will be emotionally charged in order to draw the attention of the audience, become noticeable, and easy to apprehend. Entman, further defines the word 'salience' by stating that it is the process of making pieces of information more understandable, and meaningful for the audience in order to be easily memorized. Thus, by salience the probability for the audience to perceive the information and process it, is increasing. Consequently, it is possible that different framing of the same issue may occur by one transmitter, and/or two or more different transmitters. The perspective through which the issue will be framed (as positive or negative) depends on the transmitter's intention and the facets of the issue he/she will emphasize. In this case framing might create a different version of the reality. By extension, it will promote and benefit one side and hinder the other side. Nevertheless, it is not a rule of thumb that different framing of the same issue will occur by one transmitter, and/or two or more different transmitters. So alignments on opinions might occur since the transmitter and the receiver might also establish a mutual accepted and common framing on an issue (Entman, 1992, 2003).

Different framing of the same issue is possible to occur by one or more transmitters in order to frame the same issue into diverse perspectives. This can effect publics' opinion towards this issue, no matter how controversial this might be. An example would be the Ku Klux Klan rally; citizens' perception can be affected from two different views that the transmitter will frame this event; the free speech issue, or the public safety issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007b, p. 101).

In framing theory two types of disputes can be identified. The disputes which are taking place on a mutually accepted and common frame. In this case there is a possibility for a solution on this dispute, by referring into facts. The second type is the disputes between diverse types of frames, for an example the controversies. This type of dispute is almost impossible to be solved, since several values and facts are prevailing, constituting a very complex situation. The use of facts in this case will not provide solution. (Boström & Klintman, 2003, p. 13)

Framing has drawn the researchers' attention, since they have recognized its potential and its power to (re-) define and (de-) legitimize. Power and influence does not only lay in the military

force and monetary supremacy, but also from shaping and manipulating public's opinion (Joachim, 2003, p. 269).

3.8.2. FRAMING IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Framing stands for an active and evolving process that generates frames which are explanatory. In social movement framing has been denoted as an instrument to provide meaning (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). In the social movement, framing is the construction of meaning, employed by the movement advocates and other actors, and is relevant to what the advocates are supporting and protesting for. The concept of framing arises from the explanatory processes employed by the public, in order to attribute meaning to the events, and it is not an impulsive action of meaning attribution. At the meaning attribution process, frames perform three core function in order to shape the cases. The first the focusing function, is to focus public's attention by putting into brackets what is relevant or 'in the frame' and what is not relevant or 'outside of the frame'. Second is the articulation function, is to interrelate the relevant elements of the scene and connect them together in order to give meaning, while ostracize the irrelevant set of meanings. The last is the transformative function of the frames, is to reconstitute the people's perception towards the issues, and the relationship they have with other issues or with the actors. Given these functions of the frames we can understand that the way we choose to orient our lives and perform the decision making process is based on how the issues and objects are being framed. Consequently protests and movements are not spontaneous actions, but are the results of the framing by the social movement actors, their participants and their opponent actors (Snow, 2012).

3.8.3. FRAMING IN CONFLICTS AND CREATION OF EXPECTATIONS

During a dialogue between different actors (speaker-transmitter & audience-receiver), frames are created. Each stakeholder creates a frame which helps to express and position themselves towards an issue, and their stakeholders. Through these frames, stakeholders can understand, what other people expect, and how they have positioned themselves. Consequently, they can understand, why they are acting the way they do, and what they should perform as a response to these actions (Lewicki, Gray, & Elliott, 2003). Framing theory's proposition in a conflict between different disputants, assumes that different frames are been adopted and used by the actors. These frames are associated with the conflict (Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994). Gray (2005) proposed that framing is associated with the end result of a conflict. The resolution, or preservation of the conflict, is up to the framing and how the actors will frame their perception towards an issue, on a mutual

accepted and common frame or on diverse frames. Another assumption on framing is that the disputant participants depend on the framing and re-framing as a method in order to find common grounds among them (Gray, 2005).

Framing has been associated with expectations. Framing place in a context certain information, so expectations are created. The way framing is presented, the language and the designation that will be used to describe it, (ex: as positive or negative for the environment) creates expectations to the audience. Additionally, the speaker might set the expectations intentionally as a part of the framing. On this case, the expectations the speaker sets, will assist him/her on persuading the audience. Consequently, framing shapes humans cognitive about certain issues and creates expectations from these frames. If the frames have vague concept they lead people on understanding things according to their own expectations. A good example would be how astrology is being framed. By framing the predictions vaguely, people interpret the fulfilment of these predictions and change their behavior according to their cognitive desire and personal expectations. Thus, frames are building blocks of humans' decision and judgment (Bradley, 2010).

3.9. HOW THE THEORY IS APPLIED TO MY CASE

In my thesis I am dealing with two groups, the companies and the stakeholders. According to the framing theory these two groups have a two-way communication and they are transmitters and receivers of each other's framing. The stakeholders transmit their framing through their social movements, and receive the companies' framing via CSR reports. Respectively, companies transmit their framing through the CSR reports and receive the stakeholders framing via social movements. In the literature review I have identified a framing opportunity between the companies and the stakeholders. According to the theoretical framework chapter, I have found that in social movements and in conflicts, frames exist, and play crucial rule on the dispute among the actors. Not only this, but frames are creating expectations to the people. For this reason, I will employ framing as a theory, in order identify how the actors have framed the 3 issues in my thesis. Thus, I will use the CSR reports and the newspaper articles as a source to apply the theory and identify each group's framing by identifying the facets of the issues and the salient words/phrases relating to the 3 issues. First, I will identify how the stakeholders have framed the 3 issues on the newspaper articles and then how the companies have responded to the stakeholders expectations on the CSR reports. The method is presented in more detail on the following chapter.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

On this chapter I present the research method, the sampling process, an overview of my sample, and the data sources used for my analysis. I conclude this chapter by presenting and discussing the data analysis approach.

4.1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the nature and the aim of my thesis I have used the qualitative research method. Qualitative research emphasizes into detailed and holistic data, by in-depth investigation of small samples. The sample that will be used in a qualitative research must be judged in accordance to its suitability for the specific study. Qualitative researchers usually conduct in-depth investigations in small subsections of the population, also known as samples. In a qualitative research the goal is to conduct an in-depth and contextualized investigation and understanding of the phenomenon. In such instances qualitative researchers use small sample for their study, and use criteria for the data collection process (Given, 2008).

4.2. SAMPLING METHOD: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Sampling is the process to select the subset from the population that will function as a sample. Purposive sampling is a two steps process: first the researcher has to define the population suitable for research (as mentioned above), second choose the sample from the population for data sourcing, either by probability or non-probability sampling. Probability sampling means that every individual from the population has equal chances to be included in the sample. While non-probability sampling means that individuals have to meet specific criteria to be selected for the sample (Given, 2008, p. 799). Considering the nature of my research, a non-probability sampling procedure is required, and the purposive sampling method will be employed.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling frequently used along with the qualitative research. It is a set of strategic steps to choose the most appropriate informant (in relation with the qualities that it will possess) and answer the research question. The basic principle in this type of sampling is to define the population before selecting the actual sample. The sampling strategy depends on the context in which the researcher is conducting the study and the nature of the objectives. Purposive sampling looks for the actor, situation, or place who has the greatest influence and the greatest possibility to help understand the situation. This sampling process has been reported to produce reliable results (Given, 2008, p. 697; Guarte & Barrios, 2006).

For conducting my thesis, the purposive sampling method was used. I have chosen this method since it would be the most appropriate for answering my research question. Since this method indicates to select the sample that will be relevant and most appropriate for answering my research question. At this point I will present the purposive sampling steps that were used in my thesis. The steps to conduct a purposive sampling according to Tongco (2007, p. 151) are the following: i) define the research question; ii) define the type of information that will be required and who possess it iii) define what criteria should the informants or sample must have iv) select the sample according to the selection criteria v) the source should be a reliable one. Finally, use a method to gather and analyze the data from the sample.

On the following two subsections of this chapter I will present the sampling process that I have conducted for the agribusiness firms and the stakeholders according to the purposive sampling method steps indicated by Tongco (2007, p. 151).

4.2.1. SAMPLE OVERVIEW: AGRIBUSINESS FIRMS

Define the population:

The population units were businesses, and more specifically agribusiness companies, engaged in the agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals. The boundaries of this population were geographical - firms will be based only in European and the US region.

The most concrete source to find these firms would be the market and industry reports. A research in the university's library online database; Oria and EBSCO, resulted in nine market and industry reports. Thus, these reports functioned as a source for gathering 35 companies. It is important to mention that these 35 firms had their headquarters in many different regions around the world and therefore it is not the sample that I used for my thesis. Since my sample of companies should be based on the US and/or Europe. More detail about my sample is presented below.

Purposive sampling method:

As defined in the research question, the actors in this research are the agribusiness companies, as well as the stakeholders (on this section of the paper I describe only the companies). Second, the necessary type of information would be the data from the CSR and annual reports, published by the agribusiness firms. Third, my sample had to meet four selection criteria for answering my question. The four selection criteria are described below: 1) The companies had to be located only in the US and Europe. 2) From these two regions I selected twenty companies that will form my

research sample. In order to have an equal distribution between the companies, ten will be from the USA and ten will be from the European region. 3) My sample of companies had to be engaged in the agribusiness sector and more specifically in the agriculture biotechnology and/or the agrochemicals sector. 4) The final criteria was to select only the companies with the highest reported revenues for the calendar year 2014.

Sample:

I collected the following information from company websites: the location of their headquarters, confirm that their businesses activities were the biotechnology and/or agrochemicals. From their annual reports for the 2014 period (1-1-14 to 31-12-14). Accordingly, my sample consists of 20 agribusiness firms; 10 firms from the European and 10 from the US region with the highest 2014 revenues, engaged in agrochemicals and/or biotechnology.

On the next page I have included a table illustrating my companies sample, the companies have been sorted by revenues. Prices in dollars have been converted in euro according to euro to dollar price of 31-December-2014 = 1.2107, retrieved from (exchangerates.org.uk).

**TABLE 1: EUROPEAN AND US AGRIBUSINESS COMPANIES SORTED BY 2014 REVENUES
(BILLION€)**

	<u>Company</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Revenue (billion €)</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>CSR report 1=Yes, 0=No</u>
1	Cargill Inc.	USA	138.36	Agrochemicals	1
2	CHS Inc.	USA	43.79	Agrochemicals	1
3	Monsanto Company Inc.	USA	16.26	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
4	Land O' Lakes (Winfield)	USA	15.38	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
5	Syngenta AG	EUROPE (E.F.T.A.)	13.98	Agrochemicals	1
6	DuPont Pioneer	USA	11.59	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
7	Yara International ASA	EUROPE (E.F.T.A.)	9.95	Agrochemicals	1
8	Bayer CropScience	EUROPE	9.49	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
9	The Mosaic Company	USA	9.28	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
10	Dow Agroscience	USA	7.47	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
11	BASF SE Crop Protection	EUROPE	5.45	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
12	The Andersons Inc.	USA	4.64	Agrochemicals	0
13	FMC Agricultural Solutions	USA	4.1	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
14	Isagro s.p.a.	EUROPE	1.46	Agrochemicals	0
15	Vilmorin SA	EUROPE	1.27	Agricultural biotechnology	1
16	KWS SAAT SE	EUROPE	1.26	Agricultural biotechnology	1
17	Stine Seed	USA	1.02	Agricultural biotechnology	0
18	Cheminova	EUROPE	0.91	Agrochemicals	1
19	CertisEurope	EUROPE	0.57	Agricultural biotechnology, Agrochemicals	1
20	Headland Agrochemicals Ltd	EUROPE	0.5	Agrochemicals	0

4.2.2. SAMPLE OVERVIEW: STAKEHOLDERS

Define the population:

The population units will be Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and more specifically those related with the agricultural biotechnology as well to the agrochemicals. The boundaries of this population will be geographical, European and the US region.

The source I used to find and choose these stakeholders was the daily newspapers. Thus I made an on-line research in the following publications: The New York Times, The Guardian, and Financial Times.

Purposive sampling method:

As defined from the research question, the interplaying actors in this research are the agribusiness companies, as well as the stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents), on this section I describe only the NGOs. The external constituents are not part of my sample but they are referred on the document analysis and framing chapters of my thesis. However, the external constituents had to meet the same criteria as the NGOs did when I was doing the analysis, and the information was drawn from the same newspaper articles as for the NGOs.

The necessary type of information was the data from the newspaper articles, published by the daily newspaper editors. My sample had to meet two selection criteria for answering my question: 1) the NGOs (and the external constituents) should be based in the European and/or the US region, 2) NGOs (and the external constituents) should be relevant to the agribusiness sector.

At this point I should specify how I did the search. Since one of the prerequisites for selecting the companies was the highest 2014 revenues, I decided that my newspaper research had to be done on approximately the same period. So as for the data from both sources (companies-stakeholders) to be aligned. Consequently, I made the newspaper research for the calendar year 2013 and 2014 (01-January-2013 to 31-December-2014).

In order to have a complete overview of these companies I searched based only on the name of the company to obtain related articles. Then I collected only the newspaper articles that were discussing the three themes-issues (GMOs, chemicals, and corporate control over seeds). Thus the research resulted in 25 company and issue related articles.

TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

<u>NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS</u>					
USA			EUROPE		
Center for Food Safety (CFS)	Food and Water Watch (FWW)	Organic Consumer Association (OCA)	Save our Seeds (SOS)	Friends of the Earth International (FOE)	Greenpeace International

On the table above are the NGOs identified and collected from these 25 newspaper articles. For the NGOs then I collected the following information for confirmation; their headquarters location, their relevance to the biotechnology and agrochemicals. I match these information into my criteria and I found that all the 6 NOGs fulfilled my criteria. Thus, I decided to include them in my sample. I did not excluded any of the NGOs since the number was small and I did not identified any incompatibilities.

4.3. DATA AND DATA SOURCES

The data sources that were used for conducting my research are on-line material: official verbal data sources, open and publicly available to anyone. For the firms I collected from their official websites their CSR reports for the calendar year 2014, 4 companies had not disclosed CSR reports. These documents constituted my data source for identifying words and small phrases, so as to identify how the companies have framed the 3 issues. For the stakeholders I made an online newspaper research for the calendar years 2013 and 2014, I collected the newspaper articles that were talking about the twenty agribusiness firms in my sample and the three issues. These documents constituted my data source for identifying how the stakeholders have framed the issues as well. The next section explains about the document analysis method.

4.4. DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

On this section I describe why I choose to conduct a document analysis, and why this method is appropriate for my thesis in order to assist on answering my research question. Next, I discuss what the literature dictates about the document analysis. Plus, I present the process and steps for conducting the document analysis. These steps were used to conduct the document analysis for my thesis and collect the relevant data from the documents.

For conducting my thesis, and answer my research question, it was essential to identify how the three issues (GMOs, chemicals and corporate control over seeds) were framed from each actors' point of view. Therefore, in order to identify how the issues were framed by the actors, I had to identify from each player's perspective which facets of the issues were focusing on, and how they described them (positive or negative) by using salient words and phrases. It was important to find these words, since they are building blocks of the framing, and the presence or the absence of these words manifests and reveals the frames and the framing (Entman, 1993, 2003). As Entman (1993, 2003) specified, framing is about using salient words to describe some facets of an issue in order to make them seem important for the audience. These words will be emotionally charged in order to draw the audience's attention. So as to widow a situation from inconceivable into understandable for the public (Lakoff, 2010; Joachim, 2003). Thus, by recognizing their framing, according to the theory I would be able to establish a platform for discussion to understand each players position towards these three issues (Lakoff, 2010; Entman, 2003, 1993; Benford & Snow, 2003) recognize their expectations (Bradley, 2010), and clarify if the actors were framing differently the issues, and generated different versions of the reality for these issues (Entman 2003, 1993). So identified if the three issues were framed similarly by the actors, or there were disjoints between the stakeholders' expectations and the agribusiness CSR reports, so as to answer my research question.

In order to identify these words I will employ a document analysis method. Method is the process through which the qualitative researcher collects the data in order to build his/her arguments. The most appropriate method for finding these words was a document analysis (Given, 2008). The initial part of my analysis was to conduct a document analysis, and identify the documents outline. Using the framing theory and the results from the analysis I identified the players' framing. As Given (2008, p. 120 & 230) mentioned, document analysis is the method to identify words, and small phrases related to an a priori theme definition, in order to reveal the document's outline. Themes are issues of discourse, and predetermined themes according to Given (2008, p. 120), Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 88), are revealed and specified in the researchers literature review. Therefore, it is important to declare here that the three themes that will be used as benchmarks for my document analysis, will be the three issues identified in the literature review: i) the GMOs, ii) the chemicals and iii) the corporate control over seeds. Thus, the actors' documents will be

accessed according to these three themes-issues that have been considered to be important amongst the players' interaction, and identify the words and small phrases that will be salient.

Document analysis dictates to focus on what is inside the document in communication terms, meaning that they contain messages that will be meaningful for the reader. The types of messages that can be found in a document may be text messages, but also maps, photos, charts, films, and many other communication formats. It is important for the researcher to identify what types of messages are included and how the reality is being documented in these records (Given, 2008, p. 230; Flick, 2009). Documents should not be perceived as information containers, because they are actually reports that tells a version of the reality for specific purpose (Flick, 2009, p. 259).

The consistent approach for a document analysis is to adopt a content analysis approach in order to identify words, and small phrases in a text. The synopsis of this method is to specify themes and through a close reading of the documents identify expressions (words, small phrases) related to these themes. Then categorize the verbal data into categories relevant to the research purpose to reveal the document's outline (Given, 2008; Tesch, 2013, p. 79). In more detail the steps are the following: i) this approach requires, an a priori theme definition, in order to function as a guide for the data collection process (Given, 2008, p. 120). Theme is an issue of discourse, and the a priori, or posteriori themes-issues emerge from the researcher's prior study, from the phenomenon under investigation in addition to what have been specified in the literature review (Given, 2008, p. 120; Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 88). ii) Consequently, an interpretive reading of the textual documents follows, iii) and the researcher should focus on identifying the data: words and small phrases or other units, associated to these themes-issues. A single word or phrase from a text may also be relevant to more than one themes-issues. iv) Finally, the textual data is categorized into similar groups and labeled, in order to find the outline. A label's name should be in the same language as in the text (Given, 2008, p. 121). Through this process the researcher recognizes the version of the world encrypted in these documents (Given, 2008, Flick 2009). Furthermore, document analysis provide valuable information about the trends, the gaps and processes in a sector as Wach, Ward & Jacimovic (2013) mention.

5. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND FRAMING FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS

On this chapter I present the document analysis and the framing for the NGOs and the external constituents.

5.1. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: NGOS

Here I will present the document analysis for the Non-Governmental Organizations in the European region, consisting of the Save Our Seeds (SOS), the Friends of the Earth (FOE) and the Greenpeace. And the Non-Governmental Organizations in the USA region: Center for Food Safety (CFS), the Food and Water Watch (FWW) and the Organic Consumer Association (OCA).

The document analysis was conducted on the newspaper articles in order to identify words and small phrases that were salient and associated with the three themes-issues: i) GMOs ii) chemicals iii) corporate control over seeds.

The number of newspaper articles citing the stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents) were 25. These articles were found during my sampling process from the following daily newspapers: The Guardian, The Financial Times and The New York Times. During the document analysis I focused only on the NGOs' statements regarding these themes-issues, these statements were easily identified in the text as quotations by the author of the article.

Then several salient words, and small phrases were identified and used by the NGOs' statements regarding these three themes. I have grouped these words into similar groups, labeled 'facets of issues', which will assist on framing the issues as framing theory dictates. These groups have been labeled carefully and in the same language as in the text of the newspapers in order to avoid overlapping definitions. The words have been placed on these groups according to their relevance. The group names are the following: i) firms' influence ii) food safety iii) farmers' rights iv) environmental effects and v) political connections. Some of the words have been categorized into more than one group since they were relevant for other as well.

Generally the NGOs in both regions gave a negative attribution to the 3 issues and the facets highlighted were not in favor of the companies. On the chapters below, I present the document analysis findings for the NGOs in the USA and in Europe, as well as the findings for the external constituents.

5.1.1. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: USA NGOS

The analysis revealed that the USA NGOs focused on two of these issues. The issues in which they had focused on are the GMOs and the corporate control over seeds. More specifically: the CFS discuss the GMOs and the corporate control over the seeds, but they do not talk about the chemicals issue. The FWW, as well as the OCA highlight only the GMOs issue, but nothing was found about the other issues. The 3 NGOs in the US region do not talk about the chemicals issue.

The table below illustrates the USA NGOs. The squares include the specific issues each one of the NGO had discussed. Accordingly, the facets of these issues the NGOs have highlighted, and the salient words and small phrases used by the NGOs to describe them. The empty cells are intentionally blank, since the USA NGOs have not discussed related issues.

TABLE 3: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS FOR THE US NGOS

<u>USA NGOS</u>			
Facets of issues	<u>Center for food safety (CFS)</u>	<u>Food and water watch (FWW)</u>	<u>Organic consumer association (OCA)</u>
Firms' influence:	Issue: Corporate control over seeds concerted effort, dominate, prevent replanting, lawsuit, massive funds, smashed spending records, inundated	Issue: GMOs defeat, diplomatic cables, industry's agenda, biotech agenda, force, tentacle, wield, selling out democracy	
Food safety:	Issue: GMOs dangers, mandatory, food labeling, tide, momentum, massive funds, smashed spending records, inundated	Issue: GMOs forced, vociferously, backlash	Issue: GMOs skeptical
Farmers' rights:	Issue: Corporate control over seeds balance of power back to farmers, lawsuit, prevent replanting, wielded, giant, alleging patent infringement, control, prices soaring, concentration		

Environmental effects:	Issue: GMOs harm, dangers, promising alternatives		
Political connections:		Issue: GMOs diplomatic cables, industry's agenda, biotech agenda, force, selling out democracy	

5.1.2. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: EUROPEAN NGOS

The analysis revealed that the European NGOs are focusing on two issues. These are the chemicals and the corporate control over seeds. More specifically: the SOS highlights only the corporate control over seeds issue. The FOE, and Greenpeace highlights only the chemicals issue. European NGOs do not talk about the GMOs issue.

TABLE 4: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS FOR THE EUROPEAN NGOS

<u>European Non-Governmental Organizations</u>			
<u>Facets of issues</u>	<u>Save our seeds (SOS)</u>	<u>Friends of the earth (FOE)</u>	<u>Greenpeace</u>
Firms' influence:	Issue: Corporate control over seeds concerted effort, dominate, prevent replanting, assert ownership	Issue: Chemicals revolving door	Issue: Chemicals big farming lobby
Food safety:			
Farmers' rights:	Issue: Corporate control over seeds vital to survival, public domain, prevent replanting		
Environmental effects:		Issue: Chemicals save our bees, recovery, crucial pollinators, bit of breathing space crisis, under threat, breathe a bit easier, scientific evidence	Issue: Chemicals building up, give bees a breather
Political connections:		Issue: Chemicals	Issue: Chemicals

		revolving door (between companies & government), comprehensive plan	in the pocket, exposed, solid ban
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5.2. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: EXTERNAL CONSTITUENTS (US AND EUROPE)

On this chapter I present the document analysis findings for the external constituents. The external constituents consists of any individual who reside and vote in an area (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

During the newspapers document analysis I read the articles in order to detect the individuals with the before mentioned attribute. The identified external constituents from the newspapers were: the citizens, consumers, beekeepers, and farmers.

Then I focused on what these people said about the three issues (GMOs, chemicals, corporate control over Seeds). I did not focus on other actors' statements (the author's opinion, NGO or companies statements, etc.) but only to the external constituents (citizens, consumers, beekeepers, farmers). I was able to do so, since in the newspaper articles it was clearly stated when someone of the external constituents expressed their opinion.

The document analysis approach followed for the external constituents was the same described above for the NGOs.

The analysis revealed that in the US the external constituents discussed all the three issues. In Europe the focus was on GMOs, and chemicals but not on the corporate control over seeds. Overall the majority of the issues and their facets were given negative attributes by the external constituents in both regions. I have identified only one positive attribution, it was about the issue of corporate control over seeds and specifically the firm's influence facet. The farmers in the US region argued that the GM seeds provided by the biotechnology companies are the most beneficial option in financial and yield terms. More analytically on Chapter 5.3.3. where I present the framing of the external constituents from the US and Europe.

Then several salient words, and small phrases have been identified and used by the external constituents regarding these three issues. These words have been categorized into groups under the name 'facets of issues'. The groups and their names are the following: i) firms' influence ii)

food safety iii) farmers' rights iv) environmental effects v) political connections and vi) side-effects. Some of these words were relevant for more than one group.

The table below illustrates the 3 issues and the facets of these issues the external constituents focused on. Additionally we can see the salient words and small phrases used to describe them. This table is representative for the external constituents in both regions (US & Europe). However, the framing of the constituents has been conducted into two separate subsections in 5.3.3. Chapter, since different expectations were created. The empty cells are intentionally blank, since the external constituents have not discussed anything relevant in order to fill in.

TABLE 5: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS FOR THE EXTERNAL CONSTITUENTS IN THE US AND EUROPE

<u>External constituents</u>			
Facets of issues	<u>Issue: GMOs</u>	<u>Issue: Chemicals</u>	<u>Issue: Corporate control over seeds</u>
Firms' influence:	hijack constitution, above federal court, food giants		Highest yields, economics lean towards
Food safety:	anti-GM, health effects, label, dangers, poisoning, mandatory labeling, illness problems	dangers, poisoning	
Farmers' rights:	dispute, temporary suspend		legally able, replant, patent on seeds, patent exhausted,
Environmental effects:	anti-GM, environmental effects, dangers, poisoning, environmental harm, environmental problems	inadequate review, bee decline, bee-killing poisons	
Political connections:	hijack constitution, above federal court		
Side-effects:		Super-weeds, struggling, unaffected	

5.3. FRAMING: STAKEHOLDERS

On this section I present how the stakeholders framed the 3 issues and the facets to be of interest for them.

5.3.1. FRAMING BY THE USA NGOS

Below, I describe how the GMOs and corporate control over Seeds issues, have been framed by the USA NGOs, according to the document analysis and the framing theory. I have made different subsections for each of the facets of these 2 issues and I describe how they have framed them. I have also included some examples from the text.

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Environmental effects

The CFS framed the issue of GMOs by stressing the environmental effect facet. This NGO used the words: *harm* and *dangers*, to describe this facet. They argued that the introduction of these seeds made the diversity of crops to decline. Consequently, the food supply is going to be less adjustable to the climate change, as CFS states (Shemkus, 2014a). An analyst from the CFS stated in the article the existence of GMO alternatives. The small phrase *promising alternatives* was used to describe the facet of the environmental effects of the biotechnology issue. Bill Freese a science policy analyst of CFS explains:

“There are also promising alternatives to genetically modified crops. Farming practices known as ecological agriculture – including crop rotation and the planting of cover crops – can help keep weeds at bay” (Shemkus, 2014b, p. 2).

The analyst revealed the existence of methods which could provide the same benefits as the GE crops. But the farmers do not have the capacity to engage to these practices because they don't have the funds to compete the GMO producers (Shemkus, 2014b).

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Food safety

Both the CFS and FWW framed the issue of GMOs by paying attention on the food safety facet. The CFS used the word and phrase: *labeling, mandatory labeling*, to describe the food safety facet, as well the need for a measurement, which is the labeling of GMOs (Haunter, 2013; Walse, 2013). The CFS used the words: *tide, momentum* and the FWW the *backlash* to highlight their food safety concerns about the adequacy of these ingredients for consumption. As well as their responses to

require labeling (Haunter, 2013; Strom, 2013b; Leschin-Hoar, 2014). The FWW also highlighted the facet of food safety and used the word: *forced* to describe it. Since the GM products have been forced to the public without their own will, and without any alternative (Haunter, 2013). The OCA refers to the companies' initiative to launch a new website called the GMO Answers.com. OCA is skeptical that the companies' initiatives will be actually to address the issues. The OCA frames this issue using the word: *skeptical* to describe the food safety facet. They mention that now it is difficult to build trust (Pollack, 2013; Strom, 2013a). The OCA expectation is that those firms' initiative to launch this website will be a good threshold for anyone from the public to make his/her own research about the GMOs (Pollack, 2013). A report issued by FOE in 2014 mentioned that the neonicotinoid chemicals were traced on the food we buy from grocery stores. These traces have been found on groceries stores in 18 states in the US (Gillam, 2014).

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Firms' influence

CFS, and FWW framed the GMOs issue by emphasizing on the firms' influence facet. FWW highlighted the firms' influence facet and used the word: *vociferously* to describe the firms' influence to possess their own scientist, who work for their own interests, to support their business practices by publicizing researches in favor of GMOs.

As the head of FWW said:

“A handful of business interests and vociferously defended by the scientists that work in the agriculture industry or at the research institutions it funds” (Haunter, 2013, p. 1).

Also FWW said that these companies have the power and the money to invest huge amounts of funds to bypass their movements. FWW uses the word *defeat* to describe the power of the firms to suppress the social movements that require labeling of GMOs (Haunter, 2013). CFS framed the GMOs issue by focusing on the facet of firms' influence, and used the small phrases: *massive funds*, *smashed spending records* and *inundate* to describe it. CFS used these words to describe the financial power of the firms' that spend massive funds to stop the labeling movement (Leschin-Hoar, 2014). A CFS's senior attorney mentioned that they smashed spending records on commercials, and his statement was:

“People were being inundated with their commercials on televisions” (Wozniacka, 2014, p. 1).

The competition is harsh since the NGO cannot afford these expenses (Wozniacka, 2014). However, and despite the outcome, the CFS was satisfied with this social movement. Since more and more people gets informed about these issues (Wozniacka, 2014). They say that until the FDA and the federal government impose a mandatory labeling it is important to make this battle at the legislative level since they have a chance for a public hearing (Leschin-Hoar, 2014).

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Political connections

Another facet of the GMOs issue CFS and FWW chooses to focus on, was the facet of the political connections. The words and small phrases these NGOs used to describe this facet were: *diplomatic cables, industry's agenda, force, biotech agenda, tentacle, wields* and *selling out democracy*. They used these words and phrases to highlight the under-the-table deals between the big agrochemical-biotechnology companies, and the US government in order to back-up these firms. CFS stated that they had submitted to the FDA a petition with 1 million signatures where they required to elect a mandatory food-labeling law. The FDA's response however was disappointing since they replied *'don't call us, we'll call you'* (Walse, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, the FWW revealed over 900 diplomatic cables between the State Department and the GM industry to back up the agribusinesses industry's agenda. The US State Department tried to promote quietly negotiating with Europe an agreement in order to force in European countries the biotech agenda. These cables also revealed an intense lobbying against GM-labeling in the US. Finally, they mention that Monsanto was in the front of these issues, with such a power capable to manipulate the US foreign affairs.

A significant statement by Wenonah Haunter the head of FWW:

'Thanks Monsanto and thanks, State Department. Not only are you selling seeds, you're selling out democracy' (Haunter, 2013, p. 2).

But this is not the big picture, this is just a tentacle of a huge agribusiness confederation who wields power in the US and the US government support these efforts (Haunter, 2013).

Issue: Corporate control over seeds - Facets: Firms' influence and farmers' rights

Regarding the issue of corporate control over seeds the CFS is the only US NGO from my sample to frame this issue, and cooperates with a European NGO the SOS. The CFS framed this issue by focusing on the facets of the firms' influence and farmers' rights. Regarding the firms' influence

used these words and small phrases: *giant, wield, concerned effort, dominated, concentration, control, and soaring prices* to describe it. The facet of farmers' rights was described by these words and phrases: *prevent replanting, alleging patent infringement, lawsuits and shift that power back to the farmers.*

The CFS mentioned that the giant agricultural and biotech firms wield their power towards the farmers by concerted efforts, in order to grasp from them their right over the seeds (Goldenberg, 2013; Harris, 2013). These companies have dominated the market and prevent farmers from replanting the produced seeds for the next year's yield. The NGO is opposed to this existing state of affairs and supports the farmers who have been convinced of stealing the companies' property.

As stated in the article:

“The study, produced jointly by the Center for Food Safety and the Save Our Seeds campaigning groups, has outlined what it says is a concerted effort by the multinational to dominate the seeds industry in the US and prevent farmers from replanting crops they have produced from Monsanto seeds” (Harris, 2013, p. 1).

This report also revealed that 53% of the world's seed market is controlled by Monsanto, DuPont, and Syngenta (Harris, 2013). The NGO said that Monsanto required from the farmers to buy directly from them the seeds if they wanted to grow the company's crops. Otherwise they accused the farmers of patent stealing and besieged them in order to protect the seed patents. Monsanto had been in court with several lawsuits against farmers to allege patent infringement: 142 patent lawsuits against 410 farmers and 56 small farming businesses over 27 states in the US. From these trials Syngenta won 23 million US dollars (Harris, 2013; Goldenberg, 2013). CFS framed this issue by mentioning the power concentration of this industry and the global control they have over the seed market. Only 3 agribusiness companies control and cater more than half of the market across the world. The effect is soaring prices, the cost of planting soy compared to 1995 prices had risen by 325% in 2011 (Shemkus, 2014a; Goldenberg, 2013). The CFS expectation was to balance the scale of justice because seeds is a natural element and companies do not actually create them.

As the CFS's legal expert George Kimbrell who was supporting Mr. Bowman (a farmer) said:

“victory in the Bowman case could help shift that balance of power back to farmers” (Harris, 2013, p. 1).

5.3.2. FRAMING BY EUROPEAN NGOS

At this point, according to the document analysis and the identified salient words, I will describe how these two issues: chemicals, and corporate control over seeds had been framed by the European NGOs.

Issue: Chemicals - Facet: Environmental effect

The chemicals issue was framed by Greenpeace by discussing the facet of environmental effect. Greenpeace used the word and small phrase: *building up* (to the environment) and *give bees a breather*, to describe this facet. Greenpeace highlighted the case of neonicotinoid chemical fipronil. They stated that these chemicals pollute the environment and in the long-term they mention that this concentration will be disastrous for our planet.

As Marco Contiero, the Greenpeace EU policy director mentioned:

“these pesticides have been building up in our environment for a decade, so limited, temporary bans won't be enough to give bees a breather” (Carrington, 2013c, p. 2).

Greenpeace is concerned about the protection and wellbeing of bees' population, because these pollinators have been severely harmed by the neonicotinoid agrichemicals applied by these firms. This NGO stated that neonicotinoid chemicals harm the health of the bees, resulting into a decline of their population (Carrington, 2013c; Carrington, 2013b). The FOE framed the chemical issue by focusing on the facet of environmental effect. FOE used the words and small phrases: *save our bees*, *recovery*, *crucial pollinators*, and *bit of breathing space*, to describe it. FOE fought to save the bees against any approval of neonicotinoid pesticides. An example was in 2014, when Syngenta required an exception to use a banned neonicotinoid pesticide associated to bee harm. The result was that 6.000 FOE activists protested and required from the UK government to safeguard the bees. FOE had scientific evidence linking these pesticides to the under-threat bee decline. Finally FOE won. The FOE stated that it is an important first step to recover the bee populations.

As de Zylva stated in the newspaper article:

“this gives bees a bit of breathing space to recover” said Paul de Zylva, an environmental campaigner in London with Friends of the Earth (Jolly, 2013, p. 4).

The NGO give special attention to the bees since they are crucial pollinators for the environment (Carrington, 2013a; Carrington, 2013b; Jolly, 2013; Carrington, 2014e).

Issue: Chemicals - Facet: Firms' influence and political connections

Both the FOE and Greenpeace focused on the facets of firms' influence and political connections regarding the issue of chemicals. Regarding the firms' influence facet used the small phrases: *revolving door* (between the firms and government), *big farming lobbies*. Regarding the political connections: *revolving door*, *comprehensive plan*, *in the pocket*, *exposed*, *solid ban*, and *comprehensive plan*. According to Greenpeace the European Commission in 2013 enforced a continent wide ban over the neonicotinoid chemical fipronil. But UK government voted against this ban. The reason was that the agribusiness firms intervened to UK government in order to achieve a legal circulation for these products to the markets. FOE and Greenpeace framed the issue of chemicals by mentioning that the government had been exposed. The NGO mentioned that the big farming lobby is very powerful, with expanded tentacles to the country's government, having them in their pockets. This case also supported by one of The Observer's report, published under freedom of information rules, and exposed the secret lobbying between the UK's environment secretary and Syngenta (Carrington, 2013b). The NGOs pointed out that these firms gained so power that their influence goes above and beyond the ordinary business practices to the manipulation of governmental decisions. An example was when they managed to attract governmental officials to join their forces and abandon their opposition to the agrichemicals. A governmental scientist behind an important study to argue against the neonicotinoids eventually joined Syngenta in 2013 (Carrington, 2013d).

FOE's Paul de Zylva said about this circumstance:

“this is yet another example of the revolving door that exists between government and big business” (Carrington, 2013d, p. 2).

FOE expects to be imposed a comprehensive plan and solve the bee crisis. They stated that this should be achieved by a mutual effort between the agribusiness firms, the farmers and the government (Jolly, 2013). Greenpeace's expectation is to be imposed a solid ban on these chemicals, as well as other chemicals harmful for bees. Since, temporary solutions, won't be enough to give bees a breathe (Carrington, 2013c; Carrington, 2013b)

Issue: Corporate control over seeds - Facets: Firms' influence and farmers' rights

The SOS NGO focused on two facets of the corporate control over seeds issue. These facets are the firms' influence and the farmers' rights. The words and small phrases that were used to describe these two facets are: for the firms' influence; *concerted efforts, dominate, prevent replanting, and assert ownership*. These words have been used to describe the strategy and steps these big companies followed in order to take the power from farmers and monopolize it. For the farmers' rights; *public domain, prevent replanting, shift that power back to farmers, and vital for survival*. These words were used to describe the farmers as being the victims of this case, since the companies asserted from them their free right they had on seeds for centuries. SOS, stated that the agribusiness and agrichemical firms evolved to be a powerful lobby capable to force their will not only to government but also to farmers.

An expert of SOS Debbie Barker said:

“Corporations did not create seeds and many are challenging the existing patent system that allows private companies to assert ownership over a resource that is vital to survival and that historically has been in the public domain” (Harris, 2013, p. 1).

SOS is the only European NGO to frame this issue, and cooperated with a US NGO the CFS. SOS mentioned that these firms have managed through judicial verdicts to impose a patent protecting regime. The NGO is opposed to this status quo and supported the farmers' rights and patronize them in courts when they were accused by firms of stealing their intellectual property. SOS highlighted how the firms have exercised their power. The big agricultural companies performed concerted efforts over the small farmers to draw from them their historically inherent right over the seeds which is vital for their survival. In order to increase their power and dominate this market at the expense of the farmers. SOS stated that seeds have been for centuries a public domain, and agribusiness firms asserted ownership over the seeds by a controversial patent system. Consequently, the firms prevent replanting the produced seeds by these companies for the next year's yield. SOS expectation was to fight for balancing the scale of justice and shift that power back to the farmers. They said that seeds is a natural resource, vital for farmers' survival, and companies do not actually create them, but nature does (Harris, 2013).

5.3.3. FRAMING BY EXTERNAL CONSTITUENTS IN THE US AND EUROPE

The external constituents as mentioned before are individuals who reside and vote in an area (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The identified external constituents from the newspapers are: the citizens, consumers, beekeepers, and farmers.

Issue: GMOs – Facet: Environmental effects

This facet was framed the same in both regions. The consumers in both regions framed the issue of GMOs by focusing on the facet of the environmental effects. The consumers used the phrases: *environmental harm* and *anti-GM* to describe the environmental effects facet and designate their massive protest in 2013 where 2 million people complained about the production of biotechnology crops, many of whom were from Europe (Walse, 2013; Chaffin & Pickard, 2013). They framed this issue by expressing their hostility and by posting on the companies' websites, facebook and angry twitter remarks. Consumers everywhere were opposed to these products, and a marketing research confirmed this situation by revealing the results, 55% of online consumers were opposed (Strom, 2013a; Pollack, 2013; Goldsmith, 2013; Das Gupta & Duclaux, 2014).

Next, I have described into two separate chapters the framing of the issues by the USA stakeholders and the European stakeholders, since the issues have been framed differently across these 2 regions and different expectations were created. I have made different subsections for each one of the facets of the 3 issues and I describe how they have framed the issues. I have also included some examples from the text.

Framing by the external constituents in the US

The external constituents in the US were divided into two parties, and some citizens' support mandatory labeling of the GMO products, while some others rejected the labeling requirements. However, according to consistent surveys 90% of the American citizens required GMO labeling (Walse, 2013; Wozniacka, 2014). In the US regions the majority of the public expected that the big biotech companies will eventually label the GMO products (Strom, 2013a).

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Food safety and environmental effects

The issue of GMOs was framed by the external constituents (which are against GE products) by highlighting the facet of the environmental effects. They described this facet by using the small

phrases: *health effects* and *environmental effects* to express their worries about this technology. They required from the big biotech companies to warn the consumers about the presence of these substances on food, by labeling. The words: *label* and *mandatory labeling* were also used to describe the facet of food safety and their labeling requirements to the GMOs due to their worries about consuming them. (Strom, 2013a). Additionally, the facet of food safety is described using the word: *dangers*. They said that it is dangerous to consume GM food produced by Monsanto and other biotechnology companies. Some individuals in the US were against the firms' business practices and they stated that they will not stop their protests until the companies' comply with their consumer demands. They also mentioned that these products are bad for their children, and for our planet, using the word: *poisoning*, as mentioned in the newspaper article:

‘We will continue until Monsanto complies with consumer demand. They are poisoning our children, poisoning our planet’ (Associated Press, 2013a, p. 1).

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Political connections and firms' influence

In 2013 Barack Obama signed the so called ‘The Monsanto Protection Act’ which prevented the federal courts from halting of GMO or GE seeds from sale and distribution no matter what issues might arise in the future, environmental or health. As an outflow of this movement the farmers focused on the facets of political connections and the firms' influence regarding the issue of GMOs. The farmers framed the GMOs, using the phrases: *hijacked the constitution* and *above the federal court* to describe these facets.

‘According to an array of farmers, this hijacks the constitution, sets a legal precedent and puts Monsanto and other biotech companies above the federal courts’ (Vidal, 2013, p. 1).

Some farmers and consumers highlighted that whatever it may happen, the GM seeds and products will be on the market, even though they create adverse effects. They use the words *illnesses*, *problems* and *environmental problems* to describe the potential outflows of this political connections (Vidal, 2013).

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Farmers rights

From the farmers' rights facet, regarding the biotechnology issue, another instance was in 2013, when farmers used the word: *dispute*, to describe a disagreement with Monsanto because it was

traced in the farmers' grains a genetically modified wheat. This resulted in a temporary suspension by the Japan and South Korea markets, while Europe required more tests to the shipments. Monsanto paid 2.4\$ million to compensate the farmers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho and several regional growers (Associated Press, 2014b).

Issue: Chemicals - Facet: Side-effects

Regarding the issue of chemicals, farmers focused on the facet of the side-effects. They framed this issue by pointing that the herbicide resistant GM crops have not created the promising results, but the opposite. They had to pay more money to fight the secondary pests which have evolve immunity to these chemicals. Also 49% of the US farmers had a bad time fighting these weeds. They used the salient words: *struggle*, *super-weeds* and *unaffected* to describe the side-effects facet. These weeds have developed resistance to the weed killer chemical 'Roundup', and it has been observed that the use of weed-killers has been dramatically increased in the US during the past years starting 1996 (Goldsmith, 2013).

Issue: Corporate control over seeds - Facets: Farmers' rights and firms' influence

The corporate control over the seeds issue was seen from the facet of the firms' influence and the farmers' rights by the agriculturalists. The phrase: *food giants* was used to describe the firms' influence facet. Farmers were prosecuted for patent stealing and prevented from replanting freely the seeds. A farmer who had been sued by Monsanto stated that he was authorized to replant the seeds and used the word: *legally able* to designate the facet of farmer's right. He also stated that he bought the seeds from a grain elevator, and not directly from the company. For this reason he stated that Monsanto's right was not in effect, and he used the phrase: *patent exhausted*. (Harris, 2013; Shemkus, 2014b; Associated Press, 2013a). Farmers framed the corporate control over seeds issue by mentioning the firms' influence facet and used the phrases: *highest yields* and *economics lean towards*, as Villwock a farmer from the US stated on the newspaper article:

“*There's no doubt the economics lean towards planting a GMO crop*” (Shemkus, 2014b, p. 3).

More analytically, they said that these companies can offer the most beneficial option which are these GE Seeds. This farmer spoke on behalf of the other agriculturalists in the US, and stated that they stick on using GMOs purely for the financial benefits (Shemkus, 2014b).

In conclusion, the issues to be of interest for the US audience were the GMOs, the chemicals and the corporate control over seeds. With the GMOs issue being the most significant, since many facets were discussed related to this issue.

Framing by the external constituents in Europe

Issue: GMOs - Facet: Environmental effects

Consumers in Europe and more specifically in the UK framed the issue of GMOs as in the US. They highlighted the facet of environmental effects, and they used the words: *dangers* and *environmental harm* to describe this facet (Walse, 2013). They participated at the so called anti-GM rallies and this trend was confirmed by a poll showed 35% of the Britons to be opposed to these products, compared to 21% who were in favor (Chaffin & Pickard, 2013). This framing bear fruits in Europe, and two major biotechnology companies announced prohibitions; BASF announced that they would stop the commercialization of GMOs in Europe and Monsanto would stop selling a GE maize in France (Goldsmith, 2013).

Issue: Chemicals - Facet: Environmental effects

In Europe the issue of chemicals had been framed by the beekeepers mentioning the facet of environmental effects these chemicals have. They have mentioned a very important problem not only for them as professionals, but for the proper function of the environment. These chemicals resulted in killing and reducing the bee populations. The beekeepers stated that they had released these products without proper trials. They used the phrase: *inadequate review* to describe the environmental effect facet. The beekeepers sued the US environmental protection agency for their approval and millions of citizens signed a petition for a ban on these chemicals (Carrington, 2013a). When it came for Syngenta to request an exception and use these chemicals, 200.000 citizens protested against this request and eventually won, a campaigner used the word: *bee-killing poisons* to describe the facet of environmental effects.

A campaigner Bert Wander, said:

“Its great news that the huge swarm of protest killed off Syngenta’s attempts to try and keep their bee-killing poisons in Britain’s fields. We welcome their withdrawal and we hope this is the end of it” (Carrington, 2014e, p. 2).

Finally, the citizens' stated that there is scientific evidence to support that the neonicotinoid pesticides are linked to the bee decline. They are also satisfied that Syngenta withdrawn its application. They mentioned that the ministers should prevent and ban all the causes which are related to bee decline (Carrington, 2014e). Their expectations in Europe was that the ministers would ban the neonicotinoid chemicals that harm the bees. (Carrington, 2013a; Carrington, 2014e).

In conclusion, the issues to be of interest for the European audience were the GMOs, and the chemicals. The corporate control over seeds issue had not been addressed in the European region. The external constituents in the US were concerned for all the 3 issues. Regarding the facets, in the US I identified 6 facets, compared to the European external constituents were I found 4 facets.

6. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND FRAMING FOR THE COMPANIES

On this chapter I present the document analysis for the companies and afterwards the framing of these companies.

6.1. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: COMPANIES

On 6.1 chapter I present the document analysis for the companies' CSR reports.

The three themes-issues for my document analysis were the three issues from my literature review: i) GMOs ii) chemicals iii) corporate control over seeds. In order to answer the research question I made a more targeted research compared to the stakeholders. I did not investigate how the companies framed the issues in general, since countless facets would be identified on the reports, which would not be relevant for my research. But I tried to find on the CSR reports the facets of the issues that were of interest to the stakeholders, and investigate how the companies had framed these facets as a response. In order to conclude that the CSR reports have aligned to the stakeholders' expectations the companies should discuss the facets that were of interest to the stakeholders from the same angle.

The document analysis on the CSR Reports was conducted separately for the USA and European region.

i) First, I grouped the European and the US companies into two chapters. In order to analyze them separately and according to the stakeholders framing in each region. I made this classification, because different expectations were created by the stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents) in the USA and Europe. Then, I read the CSR reports from each region, in order to find the three issues. ii) In the case that they talk about these issues, I tried to identify the facets of the issue as highlighted and discussed by the stakeholders. But, if companies discussed about other facets and/or other issues (than those to be of interest for the stakeholders) then there was a misalignment on how the issues were presented on the reports. iii) But if companies talk about the facets to be of interest to the stakeholders I gave attention on whether they discussed them from the same angle or not. If they did, I identified the salient words and small phrases associated with these facets. Finally, I gathered the findings into groups and labeled them.

If companies discussed about the facets from the same angle as the stakeholders did, then the actors had similar framing approaches and the CSR reports were aligned to the stakeholders'

expectations. On the contrary, if the facets were discussed from a different angle, then the different framing approaches amongst the actors created misalignment to the stakeholders' expectations.

I made an online research directly to the companies' websites and I found that not all the companies from my sample published CSR reports, as it can be seen from the table 1 in Chapter 4. Thus, I did the document analysis only for the companies to publish CSR reports. The total number of CSR reports were 16, 8 from European companies, and 8 from the USA companies.

USA Companies to publish CSR reports: i) Cargill Inc., ii) CHS Inc., iii) Monsanto Company Inc., iv) Land O' Lakes (Winfield), v) DuPont Pioneer, vi) The Mosaic Company, vii) Dow Agroscience, and viii) FMC Agricultural Solutions.

European Companies to publish CSR reports: i) Syngenta AG, ii) Yara International ASA, iii) Bayer CropScience, iv) BASF SE Crop Protection, v) Vilmorin vi) KWS SAAT SE, vii) Cheminova viii) Certis Europe.

On the other hand 4 companies did not disclose CSR reports, 2 companies were from Europe and 2 from the USA. USA Companies who did not publish CSR reports were: i) The Anderssons Inc. ii) Stine Seed. European Companies who did not published CSR reports were: i) Isagro s.p.a., ii) Headland Agrochemicals Ltd.

In general, the companies in both regions gave a positive attribution to the 3 issues and the facets that were of interest to the stakeholders. In contrast with the stakeholders' approach which was negatively charged.

6.1.1. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: USA COMPANIES

The analysis revealed that, 3 were the companies to discuss the facets of the issues that were of interest to the stakeholders, but they have discussed them from a different angle compared to the stakeholders. Consequently, these 3 companies did not align to the stakeholders expectations since they had a different framing on the issues. The other 5 companies had misalignment on how the issues were presented, since they did not discuss about these facets. Finally, 2 companies did not disclose CSR report.

More analytically: Monsanto Company Inc. engaged in agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals, focused on all the three issues. The Mosaic Company engaged in agricultural

biotechnology and agrochemicals, focused only the GMOs issue. Finally, Dow Agrosience engaged in agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals, talk about the issue of GMOs, and the corporate control over seeds.

However these 3 companies have not discuss the whole aspect of the facets of issues as highlighted by the stakeholders. Monsanto was the only company to discuss from the same angle as the farmers did the issue of corporate control over seeds and from the firm's influence facet, as I describe on the framing chapter 6.2.1.. The findings regarding the issues these companies bring forward, and the verbal data used to describe them, have been grouped into facets of issues and illustrated on the table below.

The table below represents each one of the US companies which have CSR reports to address some of the themes highlighted by the stakeholders. The tables illustrate each one of the US companies, and the 3 issues each company had focused on. Accordingly, which facets of these issues the company had highlighted, and the salient words and small phrases used by the company to describe them. The empty cells are intentionally blank, since the USA companies have not discussed anything relevant.

TABLE 6: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS FOR THE US COMPANIES

<u>US companies</u>			
<u>Facets of the issues</u>	<u>Issue: GMOs</u>	<u>Issue: Chemicals</u>	<u>Issue: Corporate control over seeds</u>
Firms' influence:			<u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> improved seeds, double yields, aggressive goals <u>Dow Agrosience</u> patentability, respect
Food safety:	<u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> voluntary, oppose, absence of demonstrated risk, inferior, safe, no health effects attributable, independent global-		

	experts, nutritional value <u>Dow Agroscience</u> review process, thorough consideration, corrective actions, and scientific uncertainty health safety		
Farmers' rights:			
Environmental effects:	<u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> environmental safety <u>The Mosaic Company</u> rigorous scientific standards, environmental harm <u>Dow Agroscience</u> environmental safety		
Political connections:	<u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> clear guidance		<u>Dow Agroscience</u> applicable laws
Side-effects:		<u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> peer-reviewed journals, safety studies, scientific consensus, adverse effects, educate	

6.1.2. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: EUROPEAN COMPANIES

The analysis revealed that, 4 were the companies to discuss the facets of the issues that were of interest for the stakeholders, but they have discussed them from a different angle compared to the stakeholders. So, these 4 companies did not align to the stakeholders expectations due to different framing approaches on the issues. The other 4 companies had misalignment on how the issues were presented, since they do not discuss about the same facets. Finally, 2 companies did not disclose CSR report.

More analytically: Syngenta AG engaged in agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals, discuss about the GMOs and the chemicals issue. Bayer CropScience engaged in agricultural

biotechnology and agrochemicals, discuss the chemicals issue and the corporate control over seeds, KWS SAAT SE engaged in agricultural biotechnology, discuss the corporate control over seeds issue, and Cheminova engaged in agrochemicals, discuss about the chemicals issue.

However, these 4 companies have not addressed all the facets of issues as framed by the stakeholders. The finding regarding the issues the companies had focused on, and the verbal data used to describe them, have been grouped into facets of issues and illustrated on the table below.

The table below represents each one of the European companies to have CSR reports to address some of the facets highlighted by the stakeholders. The table illustrates the 3 issues each company had focused on and the facets of the issues the company had highlighted. As well as, the salient words and small phrases which have been used by the company to describe these facets. The empty cells are intentionally blank, since the European companies had not discuss anything relevant.

TABLE 7: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS FOR EUROPEAN COMPANIES

<u>European Companies</u>			
<u>Facets of the issues</u>	<u>Issue: GMOs</u>	<u>Issue: Chemicals</u>	<u>Issue: Corporate control over seeds</u>
Firms' influence:			<u>Bayer CropScience</u> adequate return on investment, patent defense, enforce patent protection <u>KWS SAAT SE</u> Core element, safeguarding the investments
Food safety:			
Farmers' rights:			
Environmental effects:	<u>Syngenta AG</u> committed to complying	<u>Syngenta AG</u> boosting, 300-fold, tackle bee population decline <u>Bayer CropScience</u> scientifically unjustified, legally flawed, extensively examined, work on behalf of bee, responsible use <u>Cheminova</u>	

		solid documentation, largely missing, sound science, backbone in regulation	
Political connections:			

6.2. FRAMING: COMPANIES

On this section I present how the companies framed the 3 issues, and which of the facets that were of interests for the stakeholders have been discussed by the US and European companies.

6.2.1. FRAMING BY THE US COMPANIES

Two were the US companies that did not disclose CSR report, The Anderssons Inc. and Stine Seed.

Five companies' CSR reports discussed about other issues and other facets. These were classified as having misalignment on how the issues were presented on the reports. The companies' names: Cargill Inc., CHS Inc., Land O' Lakes (Winfield), DuPont Pioneer, and FMC Agricultural Solutions.

Companies to disclose CSR report and to address some but not all of the facets of the issues as highlighted by the stakeholders were 3. Monsanto Company Inc., The Mosaic Company, and Dow Agrosience. But these companies discussed these issues and the facets from a different angle compared to the stakeholders'. Consequently, the different framing approaches on the issues created misalignment to the stakeholders' expectations. Monsanto however, was the only company to have a similar framing approach but only for the issue of corporate control over seeds and specifically the facet of firm's influence. The farmers argued that biotech-firms offer the most beneficial option in financial and yield terms, while Monsanto stated on the report that the firm is committed to improve the seeds in order to help farmers to double yield.

These 3 companies are described below, I present the 3 issues, the facets and each company which discussed about them. Additionally, the salient words and phrases that have been used, so as to identify how these companies have framed these issues. Additionally I have included some examples from the CSR reports.

Issue: GMOs – Facets: Food safety, political connections and environmental effects

Monsanto Company Inc.

Monsanto framed the issue of GMOs by focusing on the food safety facet, and used the words, and small phrases: *voluntary, oppose, absence of demonstrated risk, inferior, safe, no health effects attributable, and independent global-experts* to describe it. In the CSR report regarding the mandatory labeling on GMOs they said that each country had its own labeling laws. In the US they do not want to mandatory label the goods, for that reason the company supports voluntary labeling. However, the company was opposed to label the ingredients produced by GM seeds if there was no proof about their side-effects:

“*We oppose current initiatives to mandate labeling of ingredients developed from biotech seeds in the absence of any demonstrated risks*” (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014, p. 37).

Because consumers might imply that these were inferior to their organic equivalents. Moreover, they described the process of a biotech product from the infancy level to the commercialization. Stated that a GM product takes 13 years to be released, and testing before commercialization is being carried out. Science experts have studied these products and they are proven to be safe, with no health effects attributable to consumption. Finally, in the CSR report Monsanto addressed this issue by mentioning that they do recognize the publics’ concerns about food, for that reason they share studies from independent global experts coming from the academic, business and NGOs communities. Anyone interested can access freely these health-related studies directly on the company’s website. (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014). I checked myself and 25 technical publications including the reference list (but not the research itself) are available, from 2000 until 2014.

Monsanto framed the issue of GMOs focusing on the facet of political connections. Monsanto used the phrase: *clear guidance* to describe it. Monsanto stated that the US government established clear guidance regarding the labeling of these biotech products and ingredients. Since the government did not require mandatory labeling, the company was in favor to this position. Monsanto stated that they comply with the governmental decisions, and supported only the voluntary labeling (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014).

Monsanto Company Inc.

Another facet Monsanto had focused on, was the environmental effects of the GMOs as well as the food safety. In the CSR report the company used the phrases: *environmental safety* and *nutritional value*. The company included in the report an illustration, with the biotechnology steps. This processes is carried out to choose the desired traits from living things and insert them into plants in order to enhance them. Thus, in the 3rd step the company states:

“*Plant is tested for food and environmental safety and nutritional value*” (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014, p. 23).

Monsanto’s CSR report referred to the GMO Answers.com. Which is an online initiative where the interested reader may access scientific studies, and communicate with field experts about their concerns (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014).

Dow Agrosience

Dow Agrosience framed the issue of biotechnology by referring to the environmental and food safety facets. The company used the small phrases: *review process, thorough consideration, corrective actions, scientific uncertainty, health and environmental safety*. On the CSR report the company framed this issue by stating that they apply review processes on their GMO products in order to ensure the health and environmental safety. This includes a thorough consideration on the environmental and human impacts the biotechnology products might have and take corrective actions when necessary. The company supported the creation of approaches to biotechnology that would reduce the scientific uncertainty and create confidence to the public. The CSR report also referred to the GMO Answers.com as Monsanto did (Dow Agrosience Sustainability Report, 2014).

The Mosaic Company

The Mosaic Company did not prepare a complete CSR report, but information regarding their sustainability commitments and their progress can be found online on their official website. The company discussed the issue of GMOs focusing on the facet of environmental effects. Used the phrases: *rigorous scientific standards*, and *environmental harm*, the CSR report mentioned that the company conducted trials by private researchers and universities in order to ensure that the

products did not create environmental harm. They stated on the report that they have conducted 350 trials in 2014 and they follow rigorous scientific standards for their evaluations (The Mosaic Company Sustainability Report, 2014).

Issue: Chemicals – Facet: Side-effects

Monsanto Company Inc.

Concerning the chemicals issue Monsanto focused on the side-effects facet. The words and phrases the company used in the CSR report to describe it: *peer-reviewed journals, safety studies, scientific consensus, adverse effects, and educate*. In the CSR report the company position its' self by highlighting the numerous safety scientific studies around the globe regarding the chemicals, which were published in peer-reviewed journals. The scientific consensus revealed that a proper use of these chemicals does not impose any kind of adverse effects. They said that the initiative that needs to be done is to educate their customers.

“The overwhelming scientific consensus is that when used properly, glyphosate poses no unreasonable adverse effects. Therefore, we need to continue to educate our direct and indirect customers” (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014, p. 37).

Issue: Corporate control over seeds – Facet: Firms' influence and political connections

Monsanto Company Inc.

Regarding the corporate control over seeds issue, the facet of firm's influence was discussed, from the same perspective as Villwock did (a farmer mentioned previously on my thesis, Ch.5.3.3.). Monsanto stated that they are committed to provide the best products, and the most beneficial option, with the highest yields. Monsanto used the phrases: *improved seeds, double yields, and aggressive goals*. The company highlighted in the CSR report that they made a commitment to develop improved seeds to help farmers to double yields by 2030 from 2000. According to the US Department of Agriculture the company made significant progress against these aggressive goals (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014).

Monsanto also described the facet of firms' influence using the phrases: *technology platforms, and intellectual property rights*. The company acknowledge that specific challenges arise since they

provide technology platforms but they must safeguard their intellectual property rights in order to provide innovation and adaptation to their products (Monsanto Sustainability Report, 2014).

Dow Agrosience

Dow Agrosience regarding the issue of corporate control over seeds focused on the political connections and firm's influence facet. Dow used the words: *patentability*, *applicable laws*, and *respect*. They stated that the company's principle is to comply with the applicable laws as specified in each country they operate. They would respect valid patents as well they would protect the patentability of their inventions.

“We will support the patentability of inventions as determined by the applicable laws of the countries in which we do business and will respect the intellectual property rights of others and not knowingly infringe upon valid patents” (Dow Agrosience Sustainability Report, 2014, p.37).

6.2.2. FRAMING BY EUROPEAN COMPANIES

Two were the European companies that did not disclose CSR report, Is agro s.p.a. and Headland Agrochemicals Ltd..

Four companies' CSR reports discussed about other issues and other facets. These were classified as having misalignment on how the issues were presented on the reports. The companies' names: Yara International ASA, BASF SE Crop Protection, Vilmorin SA, and Certis Europe.

Companies to disclose CSR report and to address some but not all of the facets of the issues as highlighted by the stakeholders were 4: Syngenta AG, Bayer CropScience, KWS SAAT SE, and Cheminova. But these companies discussed these issues and the facets from a different angle compared to the stakeholders'. Consequently, the different framing approaches on the issues created misalignment to the stakeholders' expectations.

These 4 companies are described below, I present the 3 issues, the facets and each company which discussed about them. Additionally, the salient words and phrases that have been used, so as to identify how these companies have framed these issues. Additionally I have included some examples from the CSR reports.

Issue: GMOs – Facet: Environmental effects

Syngenta AG

Syngenta framed the issue of GMOs focusing on the environmental effects facet and used the phrase: *committed to complying*. The company states:

“Our focus on safety and the environment begins at the start of our product lifecycle. We are committed to complying with plant biotechnology regulations and our management system for handling genetically modified crops is modeled on the ISO 9001 international quality standard” (Syngenta – The Good Growth Plan and Corporate Responsibility Performance, 2014, p. 30).

Furthermore Syngenta stated that in 2014 they trained 1,711 individuals to conduct field trials. They made trials in 411 authorized greenhouses and 203 inspections in order to make sure that the sites met regulatory requirements (Syngenta – The Good Growth Plan and Corporate Responsibility Performance, 2014).

Issue: Chemicals – Facet: Environmental effects

Syngenta AG

Syngenta on the CSR report framed the issue of chemicals by highlighting the environmental effect facet. The company as a response to the bee decline concerns mentioned on the report their efforts to protect and increase the bee populations. They used the words and phrases: *boosting, 300-fold* and *tackle bee population decline*, to describe this facet. Syngenta stated that since 2001 they have been protecting the diversity and through a program called ‘operation pollinator’ they plant field margins across Europe, boosting the bee population to a 300-fold increase. Their statement was used also and as a headline in the section:

“Boosting bee population up to 300-fold” (Syngenta - The Good Growth Plan, 2014, p. 4).

Syngenta stated on their report that since 2011 they have been cooperating with the European landowner’s organization on the pollinators’ network initiative and provided advisory by Syngenta’s experts. The company promoted practices to improve and encourage new ideas to tackle the bee decline (Syngenta – The Good Growth Plan and Corporate Responsibility Performance, 2014).

Bayer CropScience

Concerning the issue of chemicals, Bayer focused on the environmental effects facet. On the CSR report they used the phrases: *scientifically unjustified*, *legally flawed*, *extensively examined*, *work on behalf of bee*, and *responsible* use. Bayer discuss the environmental effects of their neonicotinoid chemicals and the effects on honey bees. The company stated that the European Commission suspended a number of these products in Europe. Bayer argued that their products were extensively examined and considers this decision as scientifically unjustified and legally flawed.

“Bayer considers the decision by the European Commission to be scientifically unjustified and legally flawed. The active ingredients in question were extensively examined with regard to their impact on bee health already during the approval procedure” (Bayer - Annual and Sustainability Report, 2014, p. 99).

The company has appealed this decision in order to approve these products for the market. Bayer established the ‘bee care program’ and they said that the company continues to work on behalf of bee health and promotes the responsible use of agrochemical products in order to minimize the effects of these products to the honey bee (Bayer - Annual and Sustainability Report, 2014).

Cheminova

Cheminova framed the issue of chemicals focusing on the environmental effects. On the CSR report they have used the phrases: *solid documentation*, *largely missing*, *sound science*, and *backbone in regulation*. The company discuss about the EU Commission’s suspension on neonicotinoids and bee decline, but they said that there were many factors which resulted in honey bees to decline. Such as parasites, and bacterial, but they said pesticides is indeed one of these factors. Due to these wide range of factors, the company stated that a solid documentation is still absent to relate the pesticides to the bee decline.

“Solid documentation for causal relationship between pesticides and decline of bee population is, however, largely missing” (Cheminova, Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2014, p. 12).

They discuss that this suspension was not based on sound science and scientific evidence, as well to transparent legislation, which are the backbones in regulating agrochemicals. The company’s

policy was to conduct laboratory tests, semi-field tests, as well as field test for risk assessment of these chemicals on honeybees. Testing on honey bees was mandatory, and it was part of the quality prerequisites in order to approve a product. However they said that there was a dispute regarding the dose rates used in laboratory tests, and if these tests represent the real life application on the field for bees (Cheminova, Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2014)

Issue: Corporate control over seeds – Facet: Firm’s influence

Bayer CropScience

Bayer framed the issue of corporate control over seeds focusing on the firm’s influence facet and used the phrases: *adequate return on*, *patent defense*, and *enforce patent protection*. Bayer have been investing in research and development in order to create their products. The company expected an adequate return on this investment. Through patents the company earns profits, and reinvest them in continued research. Thus, Bayer stated that it was vital to patent defense their intellectual property. The company highlighted that they are involved in legal actions to enforce patent protection for their products (Bayer - Annual and Sustainability Report, 2014).

KWS SAAT SE

KWS SAAT discussed about the issues of corporate control over seeds focusing on the firm’s influence facet. In the CSR report they used the phrases: *core element*, and *safeguarding the investments*. The company’s core policy is to protect their intellectual property because they make investments on R&D. Safeguarding these investments is vital for their survival (KWS - Sustainability Report 2014/2015, 2014).

7. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

On this chapter I present and discuss my findings and the results of my thesis, I have also included tables illustrating these results.

7.1. FRAMING IN THE US AND EUROPE

The purpose of my thesis was to research whether the environmental CSR disclosure of the agribusiness firms in the USA and in Europe, align to the stakeholders' expectations. The stakeholders investigated were the NGOs and the external constituents, and the issues identified to investigate were: GMOs, chemicals and the corporate control over seeds.

Framing is to focus on some facets of an issue, and make them seem important by using salient words and phrases to describe it. Through framing is possible that an issue might be framed similarly by the actors (transmitter-receiver) or differently (Entman, 1992, 2003). In that case there will be a conflict between the actors (Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994), the conflict or dispute on different framing approaches is difficult to be resolved as Boström and Klintman (2003) argues, but not impossible. Since Gray (2005) argues that the re-framing method may provide common grounds to resolve the conflict.

I conducted a document analysis on the CSR reports for the companies, and the newspaper articles for the stakeholders. With the document analysis as Given (2008), and Tesch (2013) indicated I used the 3 issues-themes as a guide for collecting relevant data, which is salient words and phrases used by the actors to describe and highlight facets of the 3 issues under investigation. Then I made a classification of these data into relevant groups as the method implies, which constituted the facets of these issues. Thus, through the document analysis, I recognized these salient words and phrases related to the facets of the 3 issues, which were necessary to identify how each actor framed the issues.

Then, I found how the stakeholders framed these issues, and by comparing the framing approaches, I found whether the CSR reports aligned to the stakeholders' expectations.

My research has been conducted separately for the European and the US regions, since I considered the following vital facts: each region holds different national and cultural backgrounds (Dirk & Jeremy, 2008). These differences create diverse political, institutional structures and legislative requirements that shape different contexts (Doh & Guay, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012). Not to mention that the companies perceive differently the importance of being socially responsible

across different regions in the world (Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Dirk, Jeremy, 2008). Moreover, the public, shapes different expectations regarding CSR (Doh & Guay, 2006; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012).

My thesis concludes that 7 companies, 3 US and 4 European, have discussed the same facets that were of interested for the stakeholders, but they have discussed them from a different angle. The companies gave a positive attribution to these facets and the issues. In contrast with the stakeholders who gave a negative attribution. Although both groups discussed the same facets of the issues, each ones' perspective was from a different angle. The different framing approaches on the issues constituted a misalignment on the CSR reports, since they framed differently the issues. Nine companies had not discussed about these issues and the facets, and four companies had not disclosed CSR reports.

Below I have included a discussion about the stakeholders framing, what the companies addressed as a response, as well as a discussion on the differences on the framing and expectations between these two regions.

7.1.1. US REGION

The stakeholders in the US region framed the issue of GMOs mentioning that they require a mandatory labeling on these products due to environmental, food and health concerns. They also highlighted that there were diplomatic cables between the companies and the US government, which promoted the GMO agenda and backed up these companies. The US companies on the other hand regarding the GMOs issue had a significant similarity on how they framed it and responded to the stakeholders concerns. Monsanto, Dow Agrosience, and The Mosaic Company argued that they performed tests and reviews to their products in order to ensure that they were safe for the environment and for human consumption. Also, when it was necessary they applied corrective actions to ensure the products were safe. Monsanto also mentioned that supported the voluntary labeling, but not the mandatory, their position was aligned with the US governments' requirements.

Regarding the chemicals issue, the stakeholders in the US argued that these products did not provide the desirable and promising results. Monsanto on the other hand argued that their products have been scientifically tested and proven to be sufficient from the moment they are properly

applied to the field. The company continued mentioning that the necessary initiative to be done is to provide training to the consumers.

Finally, regarding the corporate control over seeds the US stakeholders framed this issue mentioning that the agribusiness companies have so much power and market concentration that resulted into soaring prices. Firms imposed lawsuits to farmers for patent stealing and prevented the farmers from replanting the seed. They argued that the companies took from the farmers their right to free seeds. The US companies Monsanto and Dow Agrosience on the other hand frame this issue by arguing that they recognize the arising challenges regarding the intellectual property rights. However, they provide innovative products that need to be safe guarder. The firms were committed to protect their patents, but they would also respect other patents as well, as they comply with the regulations of the countries in each region they operate. I have found only one positive attribute, which was about the corporate control over seeds issue and the facet of the firm's influence. I found that farmers agree that the GM seeds provided by these firms offer them cost benefits and better yields, while Monsanto also mentioned on their CSR report that the company is committed to provide the best option for the farmers in order to double their yields.

7.1.2. EUROPEAN REGION

The European stakeholders framed the GMOs issue by mentioning that they were concerned about possible side effects of these products to the environment. Syngenta on the other hand stated on the CSR report that they conducted trials on their products in order to ensure that they did not harm the environment. Additionally, they train individuals for field trials on GMOs to ensure that they meet regulatory requirements

Regarding the chemicals, the stakeholders framed this issue mentioning that there are scientific evidence to connect the neonicotinoid agrochemicals to the bees decline in the European continent. They accused the companies and governmental official for inadequate reviews which resulted in bee harm. The stakeholders stated that the agribusiness lobby created a revolving door with the UK government and the firms attracted governmental officials to manipulate important elections about agribusiness industry. The stakeholders required a permanent and solid ban to be imposed on these chemicals by the governments. Syngenta, Bayer CropScience and Cheminova responded to this issue. Syngenta stated that they have been protecting the natural diversity and bees through various programs since 2001. The company promoted practices that improve and encourage new

ideas to protect the honey bees. Bayer CropScience argued that the EU Commission's suspension on agrochemicals was scientifically unjustified and legally flawed. Their products have been extensively tested and through the BeeCareProgram they protect bees and promote responsible use of the chemicals to minimize the side effect. Cheminova mentioned the same as Bayer did regarding the EU Commission's suspension and added that many factors resulted into the bee decline. One of these factors was the chemicals. Cheminova stated that there was a lack of solid scientific justification and before commercialization they conducted trials to bees.

Concerning the corporate control over seeds issue, the European stakeholders argued that there were concerted efforts by the agribusiness firms to take over the power from farmers and monopolize the seed market. Big ag-firms take from farmers their right to seeds and prevent them from replanting. Bayer CropScience and KWS SAAT SE as a response mentioned that they invested money in R&D in order to create their products. So, they expect return on investment, therefore it is essential to protect their patents. Bayer CropScience mentioned into their CSR report that they have been in courts with several legal action to enforce patent protection for their products.

7.1.3. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE US AND EUROPE

The stakeholders examined on this thesis were 6 NGOs and the external constituents. I have found that these two stakeholders groups had similar framing, since they focused on the same issues and they were concerned about the same facets. Additionally they discussed these issues from the same angle and attributed a negative perception. Moreover, the stakeholders in these regions had some similarities but also significant differences regarding their expectations on the 3 issues. In the US the GMOs issue was a big problem for the stakeholders investigated on this thesis. While in Europe this issue was not so intense, since the GMO products do not circulate into the market at the same degree as in the US, due to the different legal frameworks. Concerning the chemicals issue, in Europe the stakeholders were very concerned about the bee decline and the environmental effects. While in the US the stakeholders discuss that these products do not provide the promising results. Probably the reason might be that the bee decline was mostly witnessed in Europe and not in the US. Finally, concerning the corporate control over the seeds issue the stakeholders in both regions were concerned about this issue, but it was more intense in the US since the farmers in that region

had to cope with a more harsh legal environment, since they were prevented to replant the seeds and the firms imposed lawsuits to quite a lot of US farmers. However, I found a positive attribute from the US farmers mentioning cost and yield benefits provided by GE crops.

Companies in both regions had similar framing approaches among them and framed these issues by attributing positive effects. But they had different framing approaches to their stakeholders' since they discussed about the issues from a different angle. The GMOs issue in the European region was not discussed that much by the European companies as in the US region, obviously because of the differences in the legal framework on these two regions. In Europe Syngenta was the only company to discuss about this issue and highlighted only the environmental effects. While in the US Monsanto, Dow Agroscience and The Mosaic Company had to address environmental, human and animal concerns about these products as well as the labeling movements. These firms argued that the GMOs provide many benefits for our planet human and environment by also arguing that extensive tests and trials are conducted before commercialization to ensure their safety. We can see that regarding this issue significant differences have been identified. The chemicals issue on the other hand was the most important in the European region. The European companies Syngenta, Bayer CropScience and Cheminova had to address the bee decline issue, and they had established departments that protect the diversity and bees and promote the responsible use of the chemicals. Compared to the US where this issue had not been that much discussed. Finally, concerning the corporate control over seeds issue the companies in both regions discussed it about from the same angle. They argued that they recognize that the intellectual property rights is a big challenge but they need to protect their investments and their products from stealing, since they will lose money. Monsanto was the only company to have a similar framing approach to the stakeholders' but only to one issue, the corporate control over seeds. The facet discussed was the firm's influence and they discussed about their efforts to provide the farmers with improved seeds that help farmers to double yields.

7.2. CSR REPORTS IN THE US AND EUROPE

My research revealed that there were differences on the CSR reports of the agribusiness companies across the European and the USA region. According to the literature, companies on these regions have different motivations on being socially responsible, and the firms presume differently the importance of being perceived as a social responsible firm. They use CSR for different reasons,

the US firms use CSR in order to express the firm's culture, while the European companies use CSR as an activity enhancing tool. Consequently, companies across these regions emphasize into different CSR initiatives, since the prevailing issues are assumed differently (Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Dirk, Jeremy, 2008).

7.2.1. USA CSR REPORTS

The result of my study indicates that the stakeholders in the USA region are concerned for all the 3 issues. They have highlighted 6 facets relating to these issues under investigation. The USA companies have discussed 5 out of these 6 facets.

The USA CSR reports to discuss about the facets of the issues that were of interest for the stakeholders were 3: Monsanto, The Mosaic Company, and Dow Agrosience. They have discussed 5 facets out of the 6, but from a different angle, so they had different framing approaches on the issues. The rest 7 companies' CSR reports did not discuss about these facets and had misalignment on how the issues were presented.

More analytically: concerning the GMOs issue, Monsanto, The Mosaic Company and Dow Agrosience have focused on the food safety, environmental effects, and political connections facets. Regarding the chemicals issue, Monsanto focused on the side-effects facet, and finally the facets of firms' influence and political connections were discussed in relation to the corporate control over seeds issue by Monsanto and Dow Agrosience.

The USA CSR reports addressed most of the facets (5 out of 6 as highlighted by the stakeholders), and they have not given special attention to any particular facet, compared to the European CSR reports (the European reports are discussed below). This finding align with the literature review, which revealed that the agribusiness firms in this region operate CSR at the lowest level. The literature review indicates that companies in the US adopt a wide range of CSR initiatives into their agendas. These initiatives then are aligned to the stakeholders' expectations and the US companies adjust their CSR initiatives to the stakeholders' expectations and the external pressures. (Ross, Pandey, & Ross, 2015; Rankin, Gray, Boehlje, & Alexander, 2011).

The table below illustrates the companies which have addressed the facets of the issues as stated by the stakeholders.

TABLE 8: US COMPANIES TO ADDRESS THE FACETS OF THE ISSUES

Facets of issues				
Firms' influence	Food safety	Environmental effects	Political connections	Side-effects
Monsanto Company Inc.	Monsanto Company Inc.	Monsanto Company Inc.	Monsanto Company Inc.	Monsanto Company Inc.
		Dow Agroscience		
Dow Agroscience	Dow Agroscience	The Mosaic Company	Dow Agroscience	

7.2.2. EUROPEAN CSR REPORTS

Relating to the stakeholders in Europe, they were concerned for all the 3 issues, and they highlighted 4 facets. The European companies discussed 2 out of these 4 facets.

The European CSR reports to discuss the same facets as the stakeholders did were 4: Syngenta AG, Bayer CropScience, Cheminova, and KWS SAAT SE. And have addressed 2 facets out of the 4, but from a different angle, so they had different framing approaches on the issues. The remaining 6 companies' CSR reports had misalignment on the presentation of the issues since they did not focus on the facets that were of interest for the stakeholders.

In more detail: regarding the GMOs issue, Syngenta talk about the environmental effects facet. Concerning the chemicals issue, 3 out of the 4 companies highlight the environmental effects of these products: Syngenta AG, Bayer CropScience and Cheminova. The 4th company KWS SAAT SE didn't disclosed this issue since it is not engaged in the chemicals industry. And finally the corporate control over seeds issue was addressed by Bayer CropScience and KWS SAAT SE. They highlighted the firms' influence facet.

Consequently, the European companies were mostly focused on the environmental effects facet of their activities, and less on the other facets. Compared to the USA CSR reports which have addressed a wide spectrum of facets. It is interesting to mention here my literature review findings. The European agribusiness firms have a presumption that they are societally obliged to act responsibly towards the environment and society (Doh, Guay, 2006). Consequently, firms in Europe are focusing on protecting the environment. Because their philosophy indicates to do so,

but also due to the environmental movements in Europe (Maignan, Ralston, 2002). According to Maruz-Wierzbicka (2015) European citizens' perception regarding agriculture is to be as much sustainable as possible.

The table below illustrates the companies to address the facets of the issues as stated by the stakeholders.

TABLE 9: EUROPEAN COMPANIES TO ADDRESS THE FACETS OF THE ISSUES

Facets of issues	
Firms' influence	Environmental effects
Bayer CropScience	Syngenta AG
	Bayer CropScience
KWS SAAT SE	Cheminova

7.3. STAKEHOLDERS' FRAMING OF ISSUES

The stakeholders investigated in my thesis, in order to position themselves have employed 'the frames in communication' as Druckman (2001) and Chong and Druckman (2007b) defined. Which is to use words, and phrases to refer to these issues and the events. In order to identify the stakeholders framing on these issues I employed the document analysis method by Given (2008) and Tesch (2013) to identify these salient words and phrases in the newspaper articles for the years 2013 and 2014. During the document analysis of these articles, I focused specifically to the stakeholders' (NGOs and external constituents) statements, which were easily identified inside the newspaper articles. I have not included the author's opinion or third persons' statements.

First of all, my analysis revealed that the stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents) in both regions are indeed concerned about these three issues under investigation. Subsequent, my findings indicate that the stakeholders' explanatory process relating to these issues was negatively charged. In order to attribute meaning to these events, the stakeholders were not supporting the businesses, and they were opposed to their business practices. They have framed these issues as being undesirable and harmful, by focusing on some of the many facets through which these issues can be seen. Referring to Entman (1992, 2003) he argues that the perspective through which the issue will be framed as being positive or negative, is dependent on the transmitter's intention, and the facets he/she will chose to emphasize on. Consequently, different versions of the reality are being created, and the version of the reality the stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents) have

created is negatively charged. This state promotes the one side -which is the stakeholders- while tries to hinder the other side -which is the agribusiness companies. The stakeholders in both regions focused on the same facets related to these issue, but different expectations were shaped. Referring to Bradly (2010), framing is associated with expectations, and expectations can either be created by the way framing will be presented, or intentionally by the speaker as part of the framing to persuade the audience. As a result, the stakeholders through framing and as Bradly (2010) states have created expectations.

In the US region the stakeholders highlighted 6 facets related to these issues and they have not given particular attention to any specific facet. Compared to the European stakeholders which highlighted 4 facets and they have given particular attention to the environmental effects facet. This is probably attributed to the fact that more occasions have been emerged in the US region compared to the European. Consequently, the European community probably is mostly concerned about the environmental effects of the agribusiness companies compared to the USA region. Also according to my findings in the literature review Perrini (2005) states that the European community is more concerned about the sustainability practices related with the environment compared to the US.

Below I have included two tables illustrating the framing of the issues by the Stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents (EC)). One table is for the USA stakeholders and the other table is for the European stakeholders, illustrating their expectations related to these issues. Additionally, I have grouped their expectations into the respective facet of issue in order to have a better understanding of the framing. The 'EC' abbreviation stand for 'external constituents'. The external constituents make up: the citizens, consumers, beekeepers, and farmers. The empty cells are left intentionally blank, since the stakeholders have not discussed anything relevant in order to fill in.

TABLE 10: FRAMING OVERVIEW OF THE THREE ISSUES BY THE USA STAKEHOLDERS

<u>USA stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents (EC))</u>			
<u>Facets of the issues</u>	<u>Issue: GMOs</u>	<u>Issue: Chemicals</u>	<u>Issue: Corporate control over seeds</u>
<u>Firms' influence:</u>	<u>NGO:</u> NGOs said the firms block their GMO-labeling movements. Firms spend massive funds	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> NGOs said firms impose lawsuits to farmers for patent stealing. The huge power and market

	<p>in commercials. Companies published scientific researches which are in favor of the GMOs.</p> <p>EC: Obama voted the Monsanto Protection Act, farmers say big ag-firms have hijacked US constitution, putting their business activities above the federal courts.</p>		<p>concentration has resulted in soaring prices for seeds.</p> <p>EC: A farmer stated that the biotechnology firms sell the most beneficial option, which provides high yields with less costs. Farmers stick to GMOs due to financial benefits.</p>
Food safety:	<p>NGO: The NGOs required mandatory labeling on the GMO products, as a result of their worries regarding the suitability for human consumption.</p> <p>EC: Consumers, and citizens worry about health side-effects. They require mandatory GMO-labeling. US citizens are divided into supporters & dissidents to labeling. Supporters constitute the majority.</p>	<p>NGO: -</p> <p>EC: -</p>	<p>NGO: -</p> <p>EC: -</p>
Farmers' rights:	<p>NGO: -</p> <p>EC: Farmers had cultivated by Monsanto's accident GM Wheat. This resulted in temporary suspension by the global markets, and losses for the farmers. Farmers gain compensation by Monsanto.</p>	<p>NGO: -</p> <p>EC: -</p>	<p>NGO: NGOs said giant biotech firms grasp from farmers' the right to free seeds, and replanting. The NGOs fight to shift the power back to farmers.</p> <p>EC: Farmers are prevented from replanting the GM seeds due to patent protection. If they use</p>

			these seeds without permission they go to court.
Environmental effects:	<p><u>NGO:</u> NGOs said GMO crops decline the diversity. This is dangerous for the environment, the food supply will be exposed to climate change. NGOs state there are ecological alternatives.</p> <p><u>EC:</u> Consumers, and citizens are concerned about environmental harm.</p>	<p><u>NGO:</u> -</p> <p><u>EC:</u> -</p>	<p><u>NGO:</u> -</p> <p><u>EC:</u> -</p>
Political connections:	<p><u>NGO:</u> NGOs reveal diplomatic cables of the US government, which backs up the GMO agenda in US and promotes it in Europe. NGOs reveal that the US government supports anti-labeling movement.</p> <p><u>EC:</u> Obama voted the Monsanto Protection Act, farmers say, from now on the US government will support the GMOs commercialization no matter what side-effects they might generate.</p>	<p><u>NGO:</u> -</p> <p><u>EC:</u> -</p>	<p><u>NGO:</u> -</p> <p><u>EC:</u> -</p>
Side-effects:	<p><u>NGO:</u> -</p> <p><u>EC:</u> -</p>	<p><u>NGO:</u> -</p> <p><u>EC:</u> Farmers said the chemicals do not provide the desired results. Farmers end up fighting super-weeds, and power pests.</p>	<p><u>NGO:</u> -</p> <p><u>EC:</u> -</p>

TABLE 11: FRAMING OVERVIEW OF THE THREE ISSUES BY EUROPEAN STAKEHOLDERS

European stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents (EC))			
<u>Facets of the issues</u>	<u>Issue: GMOs</u>	<u>Issue: Chemicals</u>	<u>Issue: Corporate control over seeds</u>
Firms' influence:	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> The NGOs said that the agribusiness lobby has created a revolving door with UK's government. Thus, the firms attract governmental officials and manipulate the elections. <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> The NGOs said that there is a concerted effort going on by the big ag-firms, grabbing and asserting power and ownership from farmers. In order to dominate the seed market. <u>EC:</u> -
Food safety:	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -
Farmers' rights:	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> The NGOs fight to shift power back to farmers and patronize farmers in court, accused of stealing property rights. Big ag-firms have taken from them the right to the seeds, which is a public domain, and prevent them from replanting. <u>EC:</u> -
Environmental effects:	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> Consumers and citizens are concerned about possible environmental harm of the GMOs. They participated in anti-GMO rallies.	<u>NGO:</u> The NGOs are concerned about the neonicotinoid chemicals effects on the environment and on the crucial pollinators, the bees. There are scientific evidences supporting this connection. <u>EC:</u> The beekeepers accuse the agrochemical companies of	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -

		inadequate review on the chemicals, which resulted in bee decline. Beekeepers and citizens require a solid ban on these chemicals.	
Political connections:	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> NGOs said UK government was backing up with under-the-table agreements the big ag-firms' efforts to allow dangerous agrochemicals in the market. A governmental official joined Syngenta. The NGOs require a solid and permanent ban on these chemicals by the governments in Europe. <u>EC:</u> -	<u>NGO:</u> - <u>EC:</u> -

7.4. COMPANIES' REPORTS ALIGNMENT TO STAKEHOLDERS' FRAMING

In order to answer my research question, I had to identify if the companies CSR reports align with the above mentioned framing of the 3 issues. Consequently, I made a document analysis on the CSR reports for the 2014 calendar year, with the purpose to find whether these CSR reports have addressed the same facets of the issues as the stakeholders have indicated and if they had discussed them from the same angle. In other words, I wanted to identify if they had mutual accepted and common framing on these issues or they had a diverse type of framing.

The results are as follows: from the 20 companies constituting my sample, the 16 companies disclose CSR reports (8 from the USA and 8 from the European region) and 4 companies do not disclose CSR reports (2 from the USA and 2 from the European region). From these 16 CSR reports, 7 CSR reports had discussed about the facets that were of interest for the stakeholders: 4 were from the European region and 3 were from the USA region. While 9 CSR reports had not discussed about these facets. However, the 7 companies discussed these facets from a different

angle which was not similar to the stakeholders’ perception. Consequently, the CSR reports of these 7 companies had different framing to the stakeholders and misalignment on their expectations. This case, according to the theory is a dispute which cannot be resolved, and referring to Boström and Klintman (2003, p. 13) they indicate that in a dispute the actors use diverse frames to position themselves. Consequently, the actors discuss about the same issue but they develop a different perspective or inception through framing, as Chong, and Druckman (2007) argue.

These results and according to Maignan and Ralston (2002) allegations demonstrate that these companies probably have not incorporated the CSR initiatives from the positive duty perspective. But rather we could assume that they have incorporated CSR according to the utilitarian perspective, and the negative duty perspective. The companies probably have engaged into CSR in order to legitimize their business activities in the public eye, and grasp the advantages asserted by CSR in order to accomplish their objectives in financial performance terms.

The 7 companies mentioned above are illustrated on the two tables below. One table is for the USA companies and the second is for the European companies. These tables illustrate which expectations have been discussed, and how. The squares with the ‘X’ mark represent the facets of the issues which have not been addressed by the companies. I have constructed these tables with such a way as to be possible to contrast them with the above two tables 10 and 11, illustrating the framing of the stakeholders.

TABLE 12: FRAMING OVERVIEW OF THE THREE ISSUES BY THE US COMPANIES

<u>USA companies</u>			
<u>Facets of the issues</u>	<u>Issue: GMOs</u>	<u>Issue: Chemicals</u>	<u>Issue: Corporate control over seeds</u>
<u>Firms’ influence:</u>	X		<u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> Monsanto is committed to provide farmers with the best products in order to double their yields. The company recognize the arising challenges regarding the intellectual property rights. They said that they provide

	X		<p>innovations which need to be safeguarded.</p> <p><u>Dow Agroscience</u> Dow is committed to protect its' patents, but also other valid patents.</p>
Food safety:	<p><u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> Monsanto supported voluntary labeling, but not mandatory. Because their products might be presumed as inferior to the organic counterparts. Based into numerous scientific researches the GMOs have been proven to be safe with no adverse side effects for consumption. Monsanto stated that their products are extensively tested regarding food safety and nutritional value before commercialization.</p> <p><u>Dow Agroscience</u> The company stated that they conduct reviews on their products and apply corrective actions when it is necessary to ensure that the product will be safe for human consumption.</p>		
Farmers' rights:	X		X

<p>Environmental effects:</p>	<p><u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> Monsanto stated that their products are extensively tested regarding environmental side-effects before commercialization.</p> <p><u>Dow Agrosience</u> The company stated that they conduct reviews on their products and apply corrective actions when it is necessary to ensure that the product will be safe for the environment without any adverse effects.</p> <p><u>The Mosaic Company</u> The company applied tests by private researchers and universities to ensure that their products do not harm the environment.</p>		
<p>Political connections:</p>	<p><u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> Monsanto regarding the labeling of GMOs stated that their position is aligned with the US government's requirements.</p>		<p><u>Dow Agrosience</u> Patent protection will be in accordance to the regulations in each country in which they operate, and the company will comply with the law.</p>
<p>Side-effects:</p>		<p><u>Monsanto Company Inc.</u> Monsanto stated that the agrochemicals have been scientifically tested and proven to be</p>	

		sufficient from the moment they are properly used. The thing that needs to be done is to provide education to costumers.	
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TABLE 13: FRAMING OVERVIEW OF THE THREE ISSUES BY EUROPEAN COMPANIES

<u>European companies</u>			
<u>Facets of the issues</u>	<u>Issue: GMOs</u>	<u>Issue: Chemicals</u>	<u>Issue: Corporate control over seeds</u>
Firms' influence:			<p><u>Bayer CropScience</u> Bayer invest money in R&D in order to create innovative products. Consequently, they expect return on investment. Thus, protecting these patents is vital. The company stated that they are in court with several legal actions in order to enforce patent protection for their products.</p> <p><u>KWS SAAT SE</u> KWS will safeguard their investments in R&D and intellectual property because this is vital for their survival.</p>
Food safety:			
Farmers' rights:			
Environmental effects:	<p><u>Syngenta AG</u> Syngenta performs trials on their products at the start of their product</p>	<p><u>Syngenta AG</u> The company protects the diversity and bees through various programs since 2001.</p>	

	<p>lifecycle. So as to ensure that they do not harm the environment. The company trained individuals for field trials on GMOs in order to ensure that they meet regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>They have planted field margins which 300-fold the bees population, promote practices that improve and encourage new ideas to tackle bee decline.</p> <p><u>Bayer CropScience</u> EU Commission suspended some of Bayer's agrochemicals. The company stated this decision was scientifically unjustified and legally flawed. The company appealed this decision.</p> <p>Bayer had extensively examined these products before their approval. The company established the BeeCareProgram to protect the bee populations and promote the responsible use of these chemicals to minimize their effects on bees.</p> <p><u>Cheminova</u> Company said the European Commission's suspension on chemicals is not reasonable. Many factors resulted in bee decline. One of these was the agrochemicals. There is lack of solid scientific</p>	
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		documentation connecting chemicals to bee harm. The company conducts many trials and tests on bees before commercialization of products.	
Political connections:		X	

7.5. DISPUTES BETWEEN COMPANIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

As we can see from these findings the 7 companies had a weak response to the stakeholders' expectations. As well, 9 companies had not discussed about the issues as framed by the stakeholders since they had misalignment on how they presented them on the reports. Consequently, this might be the reason of the dispute between the agribusiness companies and the stakeholders, as it has also been mentioned in the literature review (Friedrich, Heyder, & Theuvsen, 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2012; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2009; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008a; Heyder & Theuvsen, 2008b; Griesse, 2007; Weisenfeld, 2012; Carvalho, 2006; Borowiack, 2004). According to Boström and Klintman (2003, p. 13), in framing the researcher can identify two types of disputes.

The first are the disputes that take place on a mutually accepted and common frame. In this case it is easy to find a solution on the dispute by referring into facts as Boström and Klintman (2003, p. 13) argue.

The second type according to Boström and Klintman (2003, p. 13) are the disputes between diverse types of frames. The framing theory's proposition assumes that different frames are adopted and used by the actors, and these frames are associated with the conflict (Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994). I have identified this case during my analysis, in the 3 USA and 4 European companies (USA: Monsanto, The Mosaic Company, Dow Agrosience, and EUROPEAN: Syngenta, Bayer CropScience, Cheminova, KWS SAAT SE). Moreover, not all of the facets highlighted by the stakeholders, but some of them have been addressed by these companies, while some others were not discussed. The USA CSR reports discussed 5 of the 6 facets, and the European CSR reports discussed 2 of the 4 facets. Consequently these companies CSR reports did not align to the stakeholders' expectations. This type of dispute according to the theory is impossible to be solved,

since a very complex situation is created and a discussion cannot be established, since the presence of different framing between the actors will make it impossible to find common grounds. However, the resolution or the preservation of the dispute is dependent on the framing and how the actors choose to frame the issues in a discussion – on a mutual accepted frame or on diverse frames. According to Gray (2005) it is up to the disputants the resolution or the perpetuation of a conflict, since the framing of an issue is not something that cannot be altered. On the contrary by the re-framing method the disputants may find common grounds and a resolution in a dispute (Gray, 2005).

7.6. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESULTS FOR BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The importance of my master thesis for the business community is reflected to the following facets.

The agribusiness firms engaged in agricultural biotechnology and/or agrochemicals and disclose CSR reports, could use my results to find what the stakeholders (NGOs and external constituents) care about regarding the issues of GMOs, chemicals, and corporate control over seeds, both in the European and the USA region. They may also find how the stakeholders have framed these issues on these regions, and what are their expectations shaped by this framing.

Additionally, the results reflect which companies' CSR reports addressed the facets of the issues that were of interest for the stakeholders. These firms may find useful information in order to improve their CSR disclosures and re-frame the disputable issues. So as to have a similar framing with the stakeholders. Additionally they could address some facets of the 3 issues into their CSR reports that may have not been identified. Also the results demonstrate which companies have misalignment on how the issues are presented, since these companies did not discuss the same facets as the stakeholders did. These firms might find this thesis interesting and useful to understand the importance of framing.

Moreover, regarding the CSR reporting in agribusiness, this thesis highlights the importance of the different national and cultural backgrounds. These impose different political, institutional structures and legislative requirements, which form different contexts within alien regions. Consequently, the companies perceive differently the importance of being socially responsible across countries, and the public, shapes different expectations regarding CSR. These aspects are vital for businesses operating on a multinational level and they should never pretermite them, since it will not be beneficial for their proper function. Additionally, an arising question from the results

of this thesis is, if the CSR reports are greenwashing. Because if it is greenwashing (something that requires further researches to be carried out in order to make this conclusion since my sample is not big enough) will shake the companies CSR foundations.

Finally, the importance of framing is highlighted and the way words and phrases are used to frame a situation. Framing can shape human cognitive, may promote self-interests, and manipulate decisions. If it used with pure intentions it will provide a good basis for a fact based debate and for the alignment of the CSR reports to the stakeholders' expectations. But if it is used to promote interests, then the different versions of reality will confuse the situation and render it difficult to be resolved.

8. DISCUSSION

These results demonstrate a rather poor response of the CSR reports of these companies, to the stakeholders' expectations. This attitude is not aligned with what the CSR implies, which is as Friedrich, Heyder, and Theuvsen (2012), Jonker and Nijhof (2006) argue, businesses through CSR initiatives focus not only on financial performance for their shareholders, but they should take into account a wide range of societal and stakeholders issues. So as to maximize the positive outcomes and reduce the negative impact for the stakeholders. It is interesting that these big agribusiness firms have incorporate CSR into their practices, and they have not responded into the stakeholders expectations. This contrasts with the basic principle of CSR which is to incorporate and respond to the stakeholders' demands in order to grasp the competitive advantage and the benefits arising from CSR (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Ambec & Lanoie, 2008).

The tendency of the firms to frame the issues differently and abstain from addressing the facets of the issues as stated by the stakeholders' is not reasonable. Since the corporate reputation of these companies is essential for their survival, and the stakeholders can badly influence their reputation as Ross, Pandey & Ross (2015) argue. A possible explanation might be that these stakeholders are not important enough to matter the companies or cause reputational damage to the firms.

On the other hand we should consider what may be the stakeholders' intentions to put pressure on these firms. Because if there are conflicting interests', arbitrary framing might be created, which will be based on fictional arguments, and we should also consider Entman (1992, 2003) arguments, that the transmitter's intention and the facets that he/she will emphasize in order to frame an issue

will create different versions of the reality in order to benefit one side and hinder the other side. Gunther (2014) argues that some NGOs have created their opposition and fears about GMOs arbitrary, by taking facts out of context, and distorting mainstream science researches. He continues stating that the NGOs claims should be also perceived from the public with skepticism, and scrutiny, like as we tend to do with the government and businesses. Since NGOs are like firms, in a sense that they have their own incentives. Finally, Gunther (2014) says that the organic food industry is backing up the anti-GMO movement, in order to create aversion to consumers for GMOs and make them buy the alternative counterparts, which are the organic food – their products. Consequently it is also possible that the NGOs might have framed these 3 issues examined on my thesis without facts, as Druckman & Bolsen (2011), as well as Chong & Druckman (2007b) argue, meaning that they do not have real evidence, and they have framed the issues with such a way so as to manipulate the publics' awareness. Moreover we should consider Dutting & Sogge (2010), and Joachim (2003) allegations about NGOs. The NGOs nowadays have small similarities compared to the NGOs a few years ago. In the past they used to work in isolation, performing activist actions, receiving limited attention by the stakeholders. But now they have understood that this is not an effective and viable practice and they have changed their policy to a more active one. The reason of this adjustment is the donors of the NGOs, who demanded not only words and promises, but concrete results. Thus, NGOs have long been on the quest to a more effective method on how to do their policy. They have found that the ideal tool to perform better is by framing. NGOs give special attention on creating and developing common frameworks and idioms, which later are being used for their activities. NGOs use framing as a lens to view the issues, discuss about them through a new way and frame them in a meaningful and understandable approach for the public. Through framing they increase their power and influence towards their stakeholders (Dutting & Sogge, 2010). NGOs draw public's attention through the strategic framing processes. Which is, to attribute a clear description of an issue, or a problem, and provide solution and justification for political actions. Through framing, NGOs render issues meaningful for the public and then guide collective and/or individual action. In the infancy stage, NGOs are not very successful on gaining public attention, because of their controversial frames and many obstacles that restrain NGOs from gaining influence. But, over time they become more formalized, establish interpersonal relations, and their frames become accepted and legitimized by the public. NGOs highlight problems, provide solutions and introduce political movements, but these actions

frequently clash with the frames of other players. In such an instance it is possible to be created a counter framing effort. When this situation occurs, NGOs must align and extend their framing issues in order to be synchronized with the target audience's experiences and contexts, and this is a big challenge for the NGOs. The following three steps are being employed by the NGOs during the strategic framing process to shape their agendas: give a definition to a problem, provide solutions or policies to address the problem, and attribute political dimension to the problem (Joachim, 2003). Technological issues such as the biotechnology sector are usually perceived negatively by the public. They express mistrust and various concerns about these applications. This is happening because the public is usually misinformed about biotechnology, since they do not have access on scientific data, and expert sources of information. Similarly, the public is being informed from unrelated sources, such as the media, and their perception is being framed according to what they will receive from these transmitters of information. However, the field of biotechnology is a rather complex field of conflicting frames and interests. Many actors are involved on the biotechnology field and they do not care only to control the sector, but also to frame the related issues associated with this industry (Reinhart, 2007).

If this is the case, it make sense that the companies have not responded to these expectations. It is not reasonable for a company to respond to every concern and every issue raised by the external environment. Because these firms operate on a multinational level, and an infinite number of issues that might be framed arbitrary will arise, always with a focus on the company.

The way these 3 issues have been framed by the stakeholders can be explained as giving a negative attribution, and these issues seems to constitute a tough challenge for the future of our planet, since they have highlighted environmental but also health side-effects. Also from the farmers perspective who will end up to be completely dependent on these big agribusiness firms for seeds provision for their survival. On the contrary, the framing by the 7 companies gave a positive meaning attribution to the issues of GMOs and chemicals since these technologies will improve the yields and feed the rising global population. Regarding the corporate control over seeds they justified their position as being their legal right to protect their property, and that they have not made any violation since they conduct their practices according to the laws. As we can see different versions of the reality have been created by the companies and the stakeholders as Entman (1992, 2003) mentioned. However, this has not prevented the capability of the businesses to discuss the issues into their CSR reports. The fact that the companies have addressed these facets of the issues

is something. It means that the companies have recognized that there is indeed a situation going on in the world, but different intentions and interests are prevailing and create different framing approaches. The companies have indeed recognized the stakeholders' expectations, but due to probably the conflicting interest, the companies and the stakeholders agree to disagree.

As we can see, the issues of GMOs, chemicals, and corporate control over seeds have a high potential, and strong incentives arise from both sides (companies-stakeholders), each side has its own purpose. As well as, the framing's capabilities, as Joachim argues (2003) which is to shape and manipulate the public opinion. This is a powerful tool for those who possess it. However, from the moment that a rational and fact-based debate has not been established yet, these conflicting interests will continue in perpetuity and the CSR reports will lack of adequacy. Subsequently, below I have conceptualized that there might be three possible meaning attributions for the occurrence of this circumstance.

1) The companies might not have decent reflexes to the pressures of the external environment. So as to identify what the stakeholders require from them, and incorporate these expectations into their CSR agendas, and respectively into their CSR reports. This might be the case why I have found inconsistencies in the CSR reports. Therefore the companies should pay more attention to what the stakeholders' concerns are, and by identifying the stakeholders' framing on the issues, they could compose their CSR reports on similar framing approaches and address these expectations.

2) The companies know exactly what is happening, but for their own reasons and interests, they do not want to address these cases, so they have framed these issues differently. Thus, through the CSR reporting the companies manage to advertise themselves as been sustainable and through greenwashing they manage to legitimize their activities into the public eye.

3) Both parties have right. Everyone's way is right in his own eyes. The companies' state on their CSR reports that the population is increasing, they fight to provide enough food for the people and use less natural resources so as to provide better yields with less water and soil. Companies base their saying into scientific researches that support their allegations. On the other hand, the stakeholders are concerned about the side effects of these products, and they also base their

allegations into scientific researches, as well as the growing power of these firms which asserts from them their rights. As Boström and Klintman (2003, p. 13) argue this case is impossible to be solved, since different frames are generated that cannot provide a basis for a fruitful debate. However, as Gray (2005) mentions, the re-framing strategy might provide a solution, but the end result or the perpetuation of the conflict is up to the framing and up to the actors' free will.

What I have learnt by conducting my thesis is that CSR according to the literature is a tool (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2009) and if the companies use it wisely they will provide a win-win situations and grasp the competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Ambec & Lanoie, 2008). However, as with all the things, practice makes perfect. Companies practicing CSR can learn from their mistakes, and improve their CSR agendas to perfection, but willingness is the cornerstone principle. CSR reporting is about communication, and framing is present to any kind of communication, either deliberate or inadvertent. If the transmitter wants to be understood by the audience in relation to an issue, he/she should know the audience's framing on this issue. Otherwise a parallel monologue will be established, which will not lead to any conclusion, but rather into a conflict. As before mentioned, there could be several reasons why the agribusiness CSR reports have not aligned with the stakeholders' expectations. Therefore, if one of the 3 cases discussed above is factual, then the findings of my thesis revealing this weakness on the CSR reports might not be actually a weakness, but an evasion. However, if it is indeed a weakness, the companies could evolve their CSR reports in the future by better understanding the issues and the framing of these issues as shaped by the stakeholders. So as to address the whole range of the facets of these issues if they truly want to be sustainable and disclose a proper CSR report.

The findings of my thesis demonstrate that the CSR reports published by the 20 companies included in my sample, do not align with the stakeholders' expectations, related with the 3 issues. Seven companies discussed about the facets as highlighted by the stakeholders but from a different angle. While 9 firms did not address the same facets as the stakeholders did, and 4 companies have not prepared CSR reports. The reason for this misalignment is the different framing approaches shaped by the actors. What I have also found is that across regions different expectations were created, and the companies publishing CSR reports should take this into consideration. These differences are created due to the different perception the public has towards their regulatory authorities, as Irani, Sinclair and O'Malley (2002) argues. Not to mention the different national,

and cultural backgrounds which have created different expectations regarding CSR. Additionally, the different political and institutional structures across the European and the USA regions have framed different restriction on the agrochemicals and biotechnology products, and these legal frameworks are reflected in the stakeholders' activism and concerns. The companies should have extensive knowledge of their external environment, the outflows and externalities of their business activities to the environment. Accordingly, they should apprehend the arising issues which will emerge by their stakeholders, and discuss them into their CSR reports according to the framing approach of their stakeholders, and not to what the company wants to communicate.

In order to broaden these results, similar studies should be conducted, for different issues and/or for different industries. However, it is possible that these CSR reports might align with some other issues which I have not included in my thesis. For an example helping smallholder farmers to grow better yields, use less water and soil for farming purposes, train farmers to properly use the agrochemicals etc. But, the result of my research do not allow me to say that the agribusiness CSR reports under investigation on this thesis, align with the stakeholders expectations related to the issues of agricultural GMOs, chemicals and corporate control over seeds.

9. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE NEED FOR RESEARCH

9.1. CONCLUSION

The purpose of my thesis was to identify if the environmental CSR disclosure of the agribusiness firms (agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals) in the USA and in Europe align to the stakeholders' expectations, specifically to the NGOs and the external constituents, related with the issues of GMOs, chemicals and corporate control over seeds. Framing theory aided me on capturing the stakeholders' framing on these 3 issues. Then, I used this acquaintance to analyze the CSR reports, and find whether the CSR reports from my sample addressed the expectations as indicated and framed by the stakeholders.

I have researched separately the European and the USA stakeholders and CSR reports. Because of the different national and cultural backgrounds, since these contexts shape diverse political and legal frameworks. Consequently, diverse expectations would be created by the stakeholders across

these regions, and the companies would have to conduct different CSR reports in order to respond to these concerns.

My thesis reveals that the stakeholders in both regions have highlighted the same facets for the 3 issues, and different expectations have been created. The European stakeholders were more concerned about the environment, while the USA stakeholders were concerned about many facets and not to any specific one. Concerning the CSR reports, I have found that they do not align to the stakeholders' expectations, since they had different framing approaches on the issues, as well as misalignment on how they presented the issues in the reports.

9.2. RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLICATIONS

The CSR initiatives according to the literature review can provide the company with many benefits. However, these outflows will be present only if the company incorporates and address into their CSR agendas the stakeholders' expectations. In order to accomplish this task, my recommendation for the companies who aim to align with their stakeholders framing, is to establish a department which will have direct communication with the external constituents. Through the social media facebook, and twitter, companies could identify what their stakeholders require and what their concerns are. So as to communicate properly their CSR commitments and frame correspondingly the issues. Something which already have been done by the GMOAnswers.com, but only for the genetic engineered products. A similar approach could be established for the chemicals, and the corporate control over seeds issue. Similarly, a cooperation with the NGOs engaged into environmental activism would be a wise option for these companies, since the NGOs would provide extensive information on the prevailing problems.

The understanding of how the issues are framed is very important to be perceived, as Lakoff (2010) argues, since only then it will provide a clear view and understanding of the case. Not to mention Lewicki, Gray, & Elliott (2003) allegations; if the company understands the framing then they will know why the stakeholders are acting the way they do, and what the companies should perform as a response to these actions. According to Joachim (2003, p. 269) power does not lay only in the military force and monetary supremacy, but to the power to (re-) define and (de-) legitimize which arises by framing is very significant. Thus, according to the findings of my thesis and these arguments, we can apprehend the importance for the firms to have a solid understanding of the framing, so as to address properly the issues on the CSR reports.

The practical implication for companies which do not manage to frame the questionable issues as the stakeholders do, is that the different framing approaches will create a parallel monologue around the issues. Where conflicts and disputes will emerge from the stakeholders towards the company. This will be difficult to be resolved (Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994; Boström & Klintman, 2003, p. 13). Probably, the conflict between the companies and the stakeholders found in my thesis might have been created because of this inadequacy of the CSR reports. The theoretical implications indicate that if it is about for a conflict to be resolved is up to the framing, as Gray (2005) argue. Thus, if companies frame the issues as the stakeholders do, and establish a fact-based debate, then the CSR reports will be significantly improved. Gray's (2005) assumption is that through framing and reframing, the disputants can find common grounds, consequently it is up to the companies to align their CSR reports to the stakeholders' expectations by addressing these issues. Otherwise the companies' efforts on CSR initiatives and CSR reporting will be pointless, since the stakeholders will be dissatisfied.

Referring to the findings of my research, there is need for an improvement of the CSR reports published by the companies included in my sample. Since they do not align to the stakeholders expectations, and the preservation of the corporate image for these companies is vital. Since they are engaged to food ingredients and chemicals, which have a big impact to society and environment. If the CSR reports do not align with the stakeholders' expectations, it entails dangers for the company, since the firms might give triggers for bad criticism. It is possible then that the public will generalize the bad image towards every company on the same industry to engage into CSR in the future.

9.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

My thesis has some limitations which need to be mentioned on this part of my paper. An important limitation of the document analysis method according to Given (2008) is that a text replicates multiple meaning. Consequently, the textual meaning within documents is subjective, and can be differently understood and interpreted from different researchers. Moreover, Tongco (2007, p. 151) argues that the purposive sampling method, which is the method used on the present thesis, is a biased method, and the results from this type of method should not be generalized beyond the units that have been included in the sample.

The arising question is, if we do not use the document analysis method, which method should be applied, and which qualitative data should be included, as well as how the qualitative data will be

measured. We must take into consideration that within a CSR report a significant number of issues are being reported, consequently countless facets will emerge out of these issue. Thus, which of these issues should be chosen, and why? How these will be representative for the whole CSR report? Before I start working on my thesis I had an interview with a professional from Syngenta AG and she told me that it is a challenging task to evaluate a CSR report and decide what to measure and how it should be measured. Due to this restriction, the document analysis and the framing theory might be a good match for the present research and for answering my research question. Since, I was able to incorporate a broad spectrum of information around these 3 issues and the engaged relevant actors under research.

9.4. FUTURE NEED FOR RESEARCH

Considering the limitations of the document analysis and the purposive sampling method as Given (2008) and Tongco (2007, p. 151) mention I will present two different options for future research. The first option constitutes further research on the present sample so as to avoid generalization of the results. The second option constitutes suggestion for future research beyond the present sample, which will provide results to be likely for generalization.

First suggestion: An ideal complementary for the present thesis would be to investigate if the stakeholders' and the companies' allegations regarding GMOs and chemicals are factual or fictional. So as to identify their intentions, because these actors have framed these issues by referring into scientific researches, but the interesting thing is that these researches were adjacent to each actor's point of view. Making it difficult to distinguish if both actors were right, or someone referred into arbitrary facts. Another suggestion would be to investigate other issues. So as to have a bird's eye view on these 16 CSR reports of the agribusiness firms.

Second suggestion: During my research I found that the majority of the CSR reports did not align to the stakeholders' expectations. This triggered my interest to identify whether the CSR reports from other industries are conducted and published according to the stakeholders' expectations. A suggestion would be to conduct a similar research in another industry, and by use of a different method, which will be more concrete compared to the limitations of the document analysis, and the purposive sampling method. My proposal for the future researcher is to count the number of GRI indicators each company chooses to disclose (for those to use the GRI framework) and investigate what their progress is related to these indicators -for say 2 years- and compare these

findings to what the stakeholders require. From this thesis a vital question emerge which needs to be clarified. It is important to identify what the CSR and CSR reporting stands for. CSR is about incorporating the stakeholders' expectations which have been evaluated by the businesses to provide financial returns for the company, while rejecting those to provide zero return? Or it is a selfless practice adopted by companies sensitized towards society, planet, and environment, and committed to provide the greatest good for the society?

APPENDIX 1: REFLECTION NOTE

Due to internationalization, events that will occur in one corner of the world will affect the firms on the other side. A conscientious professional should give special attention on the following 3 facts: create alliances, respect different cultures, and be updated. It is important for a professional to create alliances and interpersonal relationships because these kind of alliances will provide many beneficial outflows, such as information about the stakeholders' expectations, and they could provide assistance on difficult situations. The professional should respect and consider the different cultures within which he/she will operate. The different national, cultural, political and legislative requirements, constitute a context that should be respected and taken into serious consideration in order to establish solid partnerships. Then the firm should adjust their business operation and practices according to the context in which it will operate. Finally, the professional must be constantly updated. Sudden global economic shocks are now more likely to occur, due to the economic and business integration. Revolutionary technologies may change the way business operate. When these events occur they create backlash in the business community and the global economy. Therefore, the business administration professional should be prepared and create strategic plans for fast responses, whenever these events occur.

The internationalization has made companies to expand through merges and acquisitions. Their headquarters are now located across the world and their activities affect countless of people. Consequently, the business administration managers have to cope with many different expectations which are different across regions. Additionally they must align their business practices to these expectations, as well as to the prevalent legislative requirements in each region. Due to this expansion, possible deviations will be massively addressed by the stakeholders. An

example is the anti-GM movement in the USA and Europe that required the GMO products to be labeled. Not to mention the intercontinental cooperation of 2 NGOs, the Save Our Seeds and the Center for Food Watch, which both supported farmers in courts accused by the agribusiness companies for patent stealing. In an instance when the European Commission voted for a ban on a line of agrochemical products -the neonicotinoids- the decision was granted for the whole European continent. This decision forced to withdraw these products from a huge market and created financial and reputational negative effects for the firms. As we can see, business administration professionals have to cope with a new environment completely different compared that of few decades earlier. Consequently, global thinking, social network, understanding and respect of the different international cultures and legislations, as well as fast reflexes are required, otherwise internationalization will constitute a hard lesson for an inadequate manager.

The agricultural biotechnology and agrochemicals industries base their existence into innovation and R&D in order to create their products, such as GMOs and chemicals. Innovation on these 2 industries may provide solutions to many core problems our society has to face, and professionals should take this into consideration. Problems such as starvation, pests, and drought, can be resolved nowadays by means of biotechnology and agrochemical innovations. Not to mention the customers' requirement for utility from the products they buy. Consequently, for a business administration professional, especially in the biotechnology and agrochemicals sector, it is essential to focus on innovation. However, these products generate many side-effects as well. But then again innovation could be applied to address these problems and improve the products while reducing their impacts.

The findings of my thesis reveal a poor response of the CSR reports to the stakeholders' expectations. Innovation then can be applied to address and improve the CSR reports. The interested professionals could establish a department which will take advantage and use the internet and the social media. This department could establish real-time communication with the stakeholders and identify how their stakeholders frame the disputable issues, and which are their expectations. Consequently, this innovation could provide a means for the firms to identify the framing of the issues, and function as a 'breakwater' to forestall the disputes with their stakeholders.

Due to the internationalization of businesses and markets, GMO products and chemicals are spread around the world. Their benefits along with their side-effects are becoming generalized for the whole population and our planet. Side-effects such as the threatening of the natural biodiversity by GMOs, the decline of bee colonies, and the pollution of the environment by agrochemicals, are some of the many effects. These effects have also been reported to have an accumulation tendency on our planet, and in the future it is possible to witness irreversible effects. Business professionals should undertake the responsibility and address these effects, in order to reduce the harm to the environment and to our society. Luckily, such problems can be addressed through CSR, which if applied properly can solve these problems, by simultaneously creating competitive advantage for the companies. A professional must conduct responsible business practices, because the financial performance is an ephemeral condition, and eventually we will be left out onto a broken world.

The nature of my thesis is relevant to responsibility, since I have researched on the agribusiness CSR reports. I wanted to carry out this thesis in order to investigate whether or not these companies' reports align to the stakeholders expectations. The findings of my thesis represent a rather weak response of these companies. My thesis suggests that the companies should improve their CSR disclosures by better understanding the stakeholders framing of the issues. The framing theory used on this thesis highlighted the importance of understanding how the actors frame the issues, since different framing between actors generates disputes which are difficult to be resolved, while similar framing will create a fruitful basis for discussion and conflict management.

During my 2 years' studies at the University of Agder I learnt that it is vital to create interpersonal relationships with the key persons. It was also very interesting to meet people from around the world, share my experiences and learn from what other individuals from foreign countries have to say about their culture, religion, and customs. The highly internationalized environment of this master program is a micrograph of the real business world. It is a good class for a student who is going to work for a MNC after graduation, since the academic environment is a safe place for practice, as mistakes will not cost the student his/her career. The courses offered on this master's program were ideally fit with the internationalized context. The teachers had a strong background, and along with the curriculum were ideal for us as students to get to know how the businesses function on a multinational level, the necessary steps for their expansion in alien nations and cultures, and how these firms should sustain and expand their power on these regions. I was really

amazed with the sustainability and CSR concepts and initiatives. It was the first time for me to learn about this business tool, which takes advantage of the socio-environmental problems and create beneficial outflows for the firm and the society. This was also the reason why I conducted my thesis on CSR, because I do believe that CSR has the potential to solve many problems in the world, but according to my thesis findings it is up to the companies the proper implementation. Engagement into CSR does not translate always into sustainability and responsibility success. This master thesis provided me with a solid knowledge on the framing theory and its' importance in communication and the shaping of human's cognitive. As well as, the qualitative method - document analysis, which I have used for my research. The research on the agribusiness CSR reports gave me a deep understanding of what is included on these reports, and to whom they are addressed. The finding of this thesis might have an impact on the agribusiness companies which publish CSR reports. Since they could find useful information about what they should include, what is missing from their reports, and what does the external constituents care about regarding the issues of GMOs, chemicals and corporate control over seeds. In order to conduct more integrated CSR reports in the future.

I understood that the most important thing for a researcher to start with, is to be objective and begin the research without prejudice. The way of conducting a research is to have a good knowledge on the theory and method that will be use, and study what the academic community says about the topics the researcher is going to investigate. This master thesis journey provided me an insight on how the academic community functions and how to conduct a high-quality research.

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